

# THE THIRD IMPERIUM.



THE SPINWARD MARCHES

**TRAVELLER**



## The Spinward Marches

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# INTRODUCTION

The sector of space named the Spinward Marches lies far from the capital of the Third Imperium, many months from the Imperial Court and the close supervision of the Emperor. The Marches are both a backwater and a frontier, an under-developed region bordering upon independent space and less-than-friendly neighbours.

Great events have unfolded in the Marches. In the history of the Marches there have been four Frontier Wars against the Zhodani Consulate and its allies; innumerable skirmishes with Vargr raiders from Trailing. It was here that Admiral Plankwell began his bloody bid for the Iridium Throne and ushered in the Imperial Civil War, and it was his successor as Sector Admiral of the Spinward Marches, Admiral Arbellatera, who took the sector fleet to Capital and ended the matter. Further back in history, it was the Marches that gave a home to the ancestors of the Sword Worlders, and it was here that a Darrian experiment caused their star to go nova.

The Spinward Marches is an eventful region. High-tech industrial worlds are interspersed with all but uncharted backwaters and there are many forces at work. The great powers of the Third Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate jockey for position as independent systems align themselves as best suits their purposes. The Imperial Megacorporations and smaller business entities engage in cut-throat competition while mercenary forces never seem to be short of work.

The Marches are a place where skills can be sold and knowledge can be dangerous; where an independent starship or a band of adventurers can make a profit between the cracks in the system. There is always a job going... cash in hand and do not ask questions.

It is 1105 by the Imperial calendar, a time of subtle change and great potential. Events here in the Marches may resound all the way to Capital, but this is where it'll happen. This is where the opportunities are to be had; this is the place to be.

Welcome to the Spinward Marches!

## CONCEPTS & TERMINOLOGY

This book uses certain concepts which will be explained below. Most of these are standard throughout all Traveller material published during the game's long history and apply equally to any other Traveller material.

### *The Official Traveller Universe (OTU)*

The Official Traveller Universe (OTU) was first created in the 1970s. It was gradually added to and developed through many years to become the standard setting for Traveller games. The

### **About the Author**

Martin J Dougherty has been at times an engineer, a teacher, a defence analyst and a self-defence instructor. These days he makes his living as a freelance writer for the games industry and in something calling itself the 'real world'.

Martin's books include volumes on weaponry, space exploration, self-defence and military history. He has written numerous Traveller supplements for various publishers as well as other game materials for Mongoose.

In his spare time Martin is a fencer, martial artist and military historian, and has been known to play roleplaying games from time to time.

body of information set in the OTU published over the years has become known as the 'Traveller Canon'. However, since canon was developed by different people at different times there are inevitably a few inconsistencies and even contradictions.

This means that at times it was necessary to choose between conflicting versions of 'canon' or to eliminate concepts that jarred with either the remainder of the setting or with common sense. Where this was done any changes made as a result are as subtle as possible.

However, canon is something that game designers worry about. It is a baseline used to ensure that published materials do not clash or contradict one another. Once an individual Traveller Referee starts running a game, the Official Traveller Universe becomes that Referee's Traveller Universe. Fans often use abbreviations like MTU (My Traveller Universe) and YTU (Your Traveller Universe) when discussing this.

What this all means is that once you get your hands on this book, the Traveller Universe (TU) becomes YOURS. You decide what concepts to ignore, which ones to use and which ones to replace with something that fits the setting you want to play in more closely.

There are also a few places where something is not mentioned that can be found in another supplement covering the same area. Unless it is specifically said that it is not there, there is no assumption that it does not exist. That is up to you. If you have an old magazine that says that planet X has a moon made of cheese strings and it has been omitted here, you get to decide whether you want cheese-string-moon in or out of your TU. This sourcebook is a starting point, not a straitjacket.

There are, however, certain concepts that are found in almost every possible variant TU. These are listed and explained overleaf.



## ***Charted Space***

The region that has been explored by humans is referred to as Charted Space. Within this region there are many areas that are quite densely populated and well travelled by starships. Other areas are backwaters or have never been more than cursorily mapped.

The most prevalent sentient species in Charted Space are humans, and the most powerful human state is the Third Imperium. There are many other great and small powers plus independent worlds and political groups within the region.

Of course, there are few areas about which absolutely everything is known, and even if an area had been properly explored the data may not be publicly available or the public version may be entirely incorrect. There is still plenty to be discovered even in the settled regions of Charted Space, and beyond the core areas many mysteries still await discovery.

## ***Directions in Space***

Directions like North or Southwest are meaningless in space even on a relatively small scale. Within a star system most objects move in orbit about the star or a planet, and movement can be defined with reference to a suitable point. Most bodies in a star system orbit in the same general plane, known as the Ecliptic. One direction at ninety degrees to the ecliptic is defined by convention as 'System North' or 'Up' and the other as 'System South' or 'Down'.

Most movement within a system is defined in terms of being towards or away from a given body, usually the main world of the system or the star itself. The terms 'In-System' (towards the inner planets of the star system and the star itself) or 'Out-System' (away from the star) are also used. These are rather general terms but as navigation in three dimensions, whether along an orbital path or a straight line, is a complex business they serve well enough for casual conversation. Of course, starship astrologators produce rather more detailed course plots using highly advanced mathematics...

Outside the confines of a star system, some frame of reference is needed to indicate relative positions. By convention the following terms are used:

- Coreward refers to the direction towards the galactic core.
- Rimward is the opposite direction to Coreward, towards the galactic rim.
- Spinward means in the direction in which the galaxy is rotating.
- Trailing is the opposite of Spinward; away from the direction of galactic rotation.

Note: Some Imperial citizens also use the term Coreward to mean towards the Imperial heartworlds, the 'Imperial Core'. This usage is generally obvious from context. For example, it should be fairly obvious that a magazine called Coreward Gazette deals with matters in the Imperial central region and not the centre of the galaxy several thousand light-years away.

## ***Distances in Space***

Concepts like metres and even kilometres are inadequate in the face of the vast distances in space. Over relatively short distances such as in orbital space near a planet thousands or millions of kilometres are used as a measure. Larger distances in-system are measured using the Astronomical Unit, or AU. This is based on the distance of Earth's orbit from the Sun, and is about 160,000,000km.

The light-second is sometimes also used, defined as the distance light travels in a vacuum in one second. This is 299,792,458m, usually rounded to 300,000,000m. One AU is 499 light-seconds.

Over greater distances still larger measures are needed. The light-year (defined as distance light travels in one standard Earth year) is sometimes used. It equates to 63,241 AU. More commonly the Parsec (3.26 Light-years) is used as this is the maximum distance that can be covered in a single Jump by a Jump-1 capable starship.

Most Traveller starmaps use a system of 1 parsec to 1 hex.

## ***Astrographic Features***

Charted Space contains no major astrographic features such as black holes and only one rather unimpressive nebula. It does, however, have a few anomalies and interesting features. Stars tend to occur in groups (termed clusters) or long snaky chains (known as Mains). Trade and commerce tends to move along the mains as they allow vessels to navigate between systems with ease. Crossing to another main requires a ship with a longer range or some means to refuel in deep space.

Many clusters and segments of a main have their own cultural, astrographic or economic identity. These are sometimes named, for example the Bowman Arm in the Spinward Marches is a segment of the Spinward Main centring on the Bowman system.

The empty space between clusters or mains is sometimes referred to as a rift. These small rifts are usually no more than 1-4 parsecs wide and are hardly worthy of the name. Even the Great and Lesser Rifts of Charted Space are nothing compared to the vast gulf between spiral arms of the galaxy. However, they are a significant navigational obstacle to vessels using Jump drive.

A few odd features have been reported, though some may be nothing more than wild spacers' tales. They include a rosette system of five equidistant worlds orbiting a common star. This could not have occurred naturally. Nor could the rumoured ringworld located in the Vargr Extents. There are also a number of broken planets and shattered moons that seem to indicate a war of titanic proportions in the distant past.

## ***Star Systems and Mainworlds***

Most star systems are identified by their mainworld. That is, the most important planet, moon or planetoid belt in the system. This is for the simple reason that people visit worlds, not stars. The mainworld



of a system is usually the most habitable, but not always. It may be a moon of a gas giant or a planetoid belt, but most commonly it will be a planet of some kind.

The nature of the Jump drive is such that unless there is a good (usually economic) reason to visit the other worlds of a system, vessels tend to ply between mainworlds in different systems rather than the less important worlds in the same system. It takes as long to Jump a few hundred AU to an outsystem rockball as it does to travel to the much more important mainworld of the star system a parsec away.

For this reason the remainder of a star system can be quite underdeveloped, though in many cases there will be outposts, mining stations and other installations, not all of them legal or above-board, scattered about the various bodies and planets of a given system.

### ***Starports and Spaceports***

By convention, a world has only one Starport but can have many Spaceports. The designation Starport is given to the world's main port, where most commercial and passenger traffic goes. Any other port is designated a Spaceport. This can cause problems on Balkanized worlds where several governments exist; most will claim that their port is the main one.



Usually, but not always, the Starport is the best port on the planet and others will be of inferior types. Normally there will be a main port accompanied by a 'Startown' which is often the planetary capital. The Startown is usually geared to offworld visitors and doing business with other star systems, and may have more relaxed attitudes or even laws than other regions of the planet. This is not always the case however.

The Imperium considers that a Starport (but not usually a Spaceport) is Imperial territory, so that Imperial law and not local law applies there. In practice there is often a compromise in place, with shared jurisdiction in terms of law enforcement. Law levels vary from place to place, but the typical well-regulated starport tends to restrict visitors to sidearms – this may be more or less than people are permitted to own or carry outside the port.

The Startown is planetary territory, not part of the port, and theoretically local law applies there. However, the Startown is often a buffer zone between world and port, and if there are radical differences in law level then sometimes the Startown has a special set of laws in place within its limits.

The groundside part of a starport or spaceport is termed the 'Downport'. There may also be an orbital component termed the Highport. In some cases this is big enough to be a city in space, in which case there may be no need to go groundside at all if business can be conducted in orbit.

As an example, an important system might have a large Highport serving a Downport at the capital. Big ships dock at the Highport and use shuttles for passenger and cargo transport; smaller vessels can land if they choose. From the orbital Highport it is possible to go to the main Downport or to Spaceports in each of half a dozen cities, plus a commercial port serving an industrial complex somewhere. Meanwhile there is a dedicated military port, a small government port and a couple of spaceports serving small installations on other bodies in the system, for example a mining colony on a moon of one of the gas giants. A minor system, on the other hand, may have little more than a shed and a marked landing area.

### ***Faster-Than-Light Travel and Communications***

In the Traveller universe there is no Faster-Than-Light (FTL) radio or other instantaneous communication medium. The only way to get a message to a given point is to send a starship there. In civilised areas a system of courier ships and 'express boats' (Xboats) is used to maintain communications, with mail and additional information moving aboard commercial starships.

This creates a system not unlike Earth in the Age of Sail, whereby a vessel on a distant station might be months from base and the orders of its captain's superiors. Colonial governors, corporate officials, lawmen and all sorts of other individuals find themselves waiting for literally weeks if instructions are requested. Thus individuals have to take responsibility and act as they think best.



FTL travel is possible using the Jump drive. Essentially a ship enters Jumpspace and stays there, cut off from the rest of the universe for roughly a week. It then returns to normal space some distance from its starting point. A Jump-1 rated ship can travel up to 1 parsec in a single Jump (which always takes more or less a week, regardless of distance). Higher Jump-rated ships can cover greater distances but despite the occasional rumour or secret prototypes and alien vessels, reliable Jumps of more than 6 parsecs have not been achieved.

It is possible to travel more than 6 parsecs in a single Jump, but this is only one of several possible outcomes of what is known as a Misjump. Misjumping can be a slight inconvenience, bringing out the vessel a bit late or a few AU from its intended emergence point... or it can result in an unpredictable Jump of highly variable duration and distance.

There are no reliable reports of a vessel surviving a Misjump that carried it more than 36 parsecs, though there are the usual wild spacers' tales. It is assumed that those vessels that Misjumped and were not seen again were destroyed. It is definitely known that some vessels have been destroyed by Misjump accidents since in some cases debris was found.

### ***Dating Systems***

Many, indeed most, worlds have their own local dating system and many have more than one. However, the standard Imperial calendar is in use on most worlds. Within the Imperium it is generally the main dating system, and even outside it is often used as a handy frame of reference.

The system uses a seven-day week (named Oneday, Twoday and so forth) and a 365-day year. Dates within the year are given as Day-Year. For example, 054-1105 is the 54<sup>th</sup> day of the 1105<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of the Third Imperium.

### ***Currency***

The standard unit of currency within the Third Imperium is the Credit. Tendered as coins, notes or high-value credit plaques, Credits are accepted in most places but may have to be converted to local currency in some regions. The Credit is widely accepted beyond the Imperial frontier and is sometimes used as a stable baseline currency to base local transactions upon.

Since there is no faster-than-light communication system other than sending a message aboard a starship and waiting at least a fortnight for an answer, electronic banking is not widely used beyond a local level. Local systems will allow users to draw against funds deposited on-planet or assets pledged as collateral. Large and reputable organisations are generally permitted to draw funds against their reputation, so to speak, as local loans which are then paid in due course.

Large transactions may use hard currency or bearer bonds, or may involve letters of credit. Another common way to handle large transactions is to use physical or economic assets as currency – for example, the ownership of stock in a major corporation or even a starship may be transferred as part of a deal, perhaps as security while the banks on two different planets sort out the details of the cash transaction or as the actual payment.

Operating a financial system over several parsecs and with a lag of weeks is a problem. Faith in the value of the Credit allows cash to be used, which simplifies the problem of electronic transfers between institutions that might be weeks apart by fast courier.

### ***Language***

Most people throughout Imperial space and in the Solomani Confederation speak Galanglic as their first language, and it is widely understood elsewhere. Local dialects and accents vary considerably, and on some backwater worlds basic Galanglic is so mangled that it sounds like a foreign tongue. However, as a rule a Galanglic speaker can make himself understood anywhere.

Various pre-Starflight Terran languages are in use in some areas, as well as the native tongues of alien races. Vilani is spoken in cultural Vilani areas, and some purists will even refuse to speak any other language. This is rare outside the immediate region around Vland however.

### ***Travellers and Travelling***

The vast majority of people in the Traveller universe never go far from their home, at least in astrographic terms. They might go to other cities on the same world or to an orbital station; perhaps even to an outsystem colony, but even this is relatively unusual. People only move about for a reason and if there are adequate opportunities at home then the average citizen will stay there.

Some individuals attend offworld universities and a percentage of those go on to dwell for a time or even settle permanently on a different world. Others serve in the military or with a big corporation that may move them around from time to time. Others move from world to world as part of their job; diplomats, roughnecks, entertainers and a wide range of other types of people will go from place to place to follow the paycheck or assignment.

However, these people are not Travellers (with a capital T). That distinction is reserved for a certain type of individual, and the connotations are not always positive. There is no precise definition of a Traveller; it is instead a label applied to a person who moves around a lot by choice as much as out of necessity.

Travellers are varied. Some are simply well-off tourists, some are mercenaries or freelance professionals of various types. Others work aboard small starships unaffiliated with any government or major shipping line. Some are pursuing a personal goal which



might be anything from scientific research to vengeance. Some just travel for the fun of it and a handful are professional adventurers who undertake dangerous jobs for high-paying clients.

What these people all have in common is an apparent inability to put down roots. Most will eventually (or intermittently) settle down somewhere but for the present time they wander about. Travellers have a bad reputation in some quarters as unreliable, or as troublemakers who poke into things better left alone.

In other places they are welcomed either for the skills they can provide during their stay or for the Credits they will pay for their accommodation and recreation. Travellers can be a useful temporary asset to some governments and organisations – resourceful, intrepid and deniable – or they can be nothing but a nuisance. It depends very much on the individuals concerned – there are few hard-and-fast rules concerning Travellers.

### ***Free Traders***

Considered by some to be a subset of Travellers, Free Traders are something similar but slightly different. The term is applied in different contexts to a class of starship and to the personnel that crew them. It is also loosely applied to anyone or any ship engaging in a general type of activity.

Thus 'Free Trader' can define a specific type of starship, a small merchant craft suitable for free-trading operations, or it could refer to any ship or crew engaging in opportunistic independent tramp trading without a set route.

Most of the goods and passengers that are moved around the Marches travel aboard large freighters, freightliners or dedicated passenger ships. These are generally tied to a set route and call regularly at their stopovers. Smaller ships ply the same routes and less profitable ones, picking up the slack in the system. Many minor trade routes are not profitable at standard freighting rates, but it is considered desirable to have vessels on the route. The result is the subsidized merchant.

The 'subbie' is both a specific class of ship and a general activity. Subsidised routes are partially paid for by commercial activity and partly by government money from local worlds or trade alliances that feel the need for a regular service. Note that while ships of the class termed Subsidized Merchants are well suited to such activity, they can do other things such as free trading, and a subsidized route can be plied by craft of other types.

Although the big shipping lines and the subsidized routes move most of the cargo and passengers, there is some slack in the system; enough that a small merchant ship can make an honest living, just about.

These Free Traders wander on and off the main shipping lanes engaging in whatever commercial activity seems to offer the best prospects. This could be a charter to deliver something or carry out a mission, standard-rate freighting, a mail contract, a short-term naval auxiliary commission or speculative trade whereby the crew buy a cargo and try to sell it at a profit, rather than shipping other people's goods for a fee.

Most of the time a Free Trader can get by, with lean patches and the occasional bonanza caused by a good speculative investment or a lucrative urgent job. However, it does not take much to drive a Free Trader into the red. A crew that are in need of funds may be inclined to take risks or break the law. They might go down the route of risky high-stakes speculative trade in restricted items or take a job they know is going to be trouble.

Some crews may cross the line into illegal activity ranging from the relatively minor such as smuggling (the 'small package trade') or trafficking in illegal but not very harmful items all the way through to outright piracy. The majority of pirates are not career buccaneers but are 'ethically challenged merchants' who cross the line between legitimate commerce and piracy when it suits them.

Free Traders tend to frequent backwater ports where the markets are not sewn up by the big shipping lines. These can be dangerous places so crews are usually made up of clued-up and 'handy' individuals. Armament (personal and ship-mounted) is common, as is a willingness to use it at need.

This does not mean that all Free Trader crews are down-at-heel desperadoes one step removed from pirates; most are professional spacers who sometimes frequent dubious places and take appropriate precautions. However, it can be hard to tell streetwise good guys from the bad apples.

### ***The Travellers' Aid Society***

Ironically, while many Travellers are members of and make use of The Travellers' Aid Society (TAS), it was set up to assist the more mundane traveller (no capital T). TAS maintains a chain of hostels which vary considerably in quality from excellent hotels to draughty shacks, and provides information to its members about local conditions.

While TAS was created with the needs (and money) of well-off businesspersons and minor nobles in mind, it has gradually come to cater to a more ordinary class of person. Anyone can rent a room in most TAS facilities, but the Member's Lounge and the special facilities (which generally include accurate and up to date local information on what's really going on) are reserved for members.

Membership can be awarded for service or, as cynics claim, for being someone TAS would like to have as a member. It can also be bought for a straight one million Credits, though some candidates are 'blackballed' after paying for various reasons.



TAS publishes JTAS – the Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society. This is a well-respected news and current events journal, with features on interesting people and places across Charted Space. The 'open' version can be bought by anyone and helps fund the reporters and the society itself. Members have access to a slightly more comprehensive version and the JTAS archives, which are very extensive and contain information on a wide range of subjects.

TAS is in no way a secret society, nor is it a 'universal siblinghood of Travellers'. There is no guarantee that an influential person staying in a TAS hostel will want to talk to a down-at-heel adventurer just because they are both TAS members. However, it at least provides a place where interesting and perhaps useful people can be met if the Traveller makes the right approach. Sometimes job offers and information come through the TAS network and are not seen by outsiders.

Overall, TAS is very useful to Travellers. Whether it is worth spending a million credits on is another question entirely.

## ***THE MAIN INTELLIGENT SPECIES***

Humans, of one sort or another, are the main intelligent race in the Spinward Marches and much of Charted Space in general. There are, however, several other major and minor intelligent species.

The term 'Major Race' has two meanings. Imperial scientists apply the term precisely to mean any race or species that invented the Jump Drive independently. In this context a Minor Race is a species that either received Jump-drive technology from another source (e.g. buying it or reverse-engineering an example found in a wreck) or has not developed interstellar travel at all.

However, the terms are sometimes used rather more loosely to refer to the power and prominence of a species. By this definition some 'major' races are actually quite unimportant while some 'minor' species are very influential.

### ***Humaniti***

Exactly when 'Humanity' became 'Humaniti' is no longer known. While the word 'humanity' has various meanings, 'Humaniti' has only one – it is the name of the dominant species in the Third Imperium.

There are three Major and many Minor (by the definitions above) human races. All are offshoots of the same basic genetic stock and most, but not all, can interbreed. There are also vast numbers of cultural groups who may seem very different from the rest of Humaniti but are in fact genetically identical. Sometimes these are mistakenly identified as minor human races.

To truly be a minor race rather than a social or cultural group requires some significant genetic difference from the rest of Humaniti. This can occur gradually, as a result of a restricted gene pool over many

millennia or as an adaptation to harsh conditions. It can also be deliberate. Some minor human races have been deliberately altered, and in a few cases this was quite radical. A few altered themselves, some were adapted as part of colonial programs and some were changed by outside influence.

It is generally thought that the ancestral homeworld of Humaniti in all its many forms is Terra, or Old Earth. Other locations have been postulated, but currently the most widely-accepted theory holds that humans originated at a single point, which was most likely to be Terra, and spread across the galaxy in the distant past, becoming disparate racial and cultural groups before the modern period.

The spread of Humaniti is generally attributed to a group known as the Ancients, a powerful and technologically advanced species or group which dominated the region 300,000 years or so in the past. Some claim that these Ancients were in fact humans; others suggest that humans were servitors or allies of the Ancients who were left behind when the Ancients disappeared.

Whatever the reasons, modern Humaniti displays an amazing diversity of cultures, philosophies, religions, and personalities. As a result, some of the most alien cultures encountered are Human. Humans are also amazingly adaptable, many times even able to fully integrate into alien run societies. Despite this diversity, all human races are amazingly similar in their physiology, even those who have been genetically engineered, such that most Human races are capable of interbreeding with each other.

There is considerable variety in skin tone, eye and hair colour, height, build and similar physical characteristics. Presumably this is because the originally transplanted humans were very diverse. It does mean that it is not possible to tell by looking at someone whether he or she belongs to any given racial group unless there are cultural clues. Dress, mannerisms, accents and such like will usually indicate a person's cultural origin.

### **SOLOMANI**

The Solomani often claim to be the true 'root stock' of Humaniti as they developed on Terra itself. Others point out that these are the people who were left behind when humans went or were taken to the stars during the Ancients period.

Culturally, the Solomani tend to towards being explorers and inventors, and are highly individualistic. Their societies tend to be in a constant state of change and development, which is not always positive. However, as a result of this the Solomani have expanded far out from their distant home and their cultural enclaves can be found almost anywhere, often melded with local societies.

There is a Solomani state, named the Solomani Confederation, which broke away from the Imperium just over a century ago and retained its independence, more or less, in what became known as the Solomani Rim War. Although Terra and the surrounding regions





were retaken by the Imperium, the subsequent peace settlement created the Solomani Confederation, which has its own cultural outlook.

Most humans of Solomani descent feel little sympathy with the Solomani Confederation. It is physically and culturally distant. Indeed, the Solomani Confederation is sometimes seen as ‘the bad guys’ by Imperial citizens as it fought a war against the Imperium in recent history.

Solomani Confederation influence is low to non-existent in the Spinward Marches, though there are many Solomani cultural groups. These Imperial-Solomani are first and foremost Imperial citizens, though they may display elements of old-earth cultures. Sometimes these are vastly distorted or idealised versions of a pre-interstellar Terran culture; often they are a product of local conditions.

#### VILANI

The Vilani are more culturally homogenous than the Solomani or most other large human groups. According to the best current theories, the Vilani are descendants of humans who were transplanted or made their way to the world of Vland during the Ancients period. After a long and troubled period struggling against their homeworld, which was only borderline-habitable to humans, they eventually made their way back into space.

The Vilani were probably the first humans to regain the stars after the Ancients departed. They gradually built an empire that is said to have included 15,000 worlds. Known as the Ziru Sirka, or Grand Empire of Stars, this Vilani empire is sometimes referred to as the Vilani Imperium or the First Imperium. It was highly conservative and restricted the development of many worlds in the name of stability. This seems to have worked; the Ziru Sirka lasted for over 7,000 years.

Vilani tend to be highly conservative in outlook. Tradition is a powerful force in society, and traditional methods are applied to most problems. Of course, 7,000 years is long enough to have developed an effective traditional response to most situations.

Vilani society is very group-oriented and is built around guilds and bureaus that run the various services needed to keep a society working. Some of these are today Imperial Megacorporations with fingers in many pies all across the Imperium. However, the very nature of Vilani society is such that cultural Vilani are not as widespread as Solomani. Small groups can be found almost anywhere but the main concentrations are located in the region around Vland.

Pure-blood racial Vilani tend to live very long lives. However, this trait is heavily diluted by interbreeding. Mixed-blooded Vilani will tend to live only marginally longer than Solomani or any other mixed-race human. Most cultural Vilani are not pure-blooded members of the Vilani ‘race’.

Typical Vilani view scientific and technological progress with disdain. Stability is more important than progress, and societies dominated by Vilani culture will be very resistant to change. The Vilani culture is dominant in a fairly large area of the Imperium. In these areas new initiatives from Capital tend to meet considerable resistance. Conversely, Vilani regions tend to be stable, orderly and, usually, prosperous.

Within the Spinward Marches, the Vilani culture is not dominant except in small areas on a few worlds. Most humans in the region do not hold traditional Vilani views.

#### ZHODANI

The Zhodani are the third major human race. Their home region is to Spinward-Coreward of the Spinward Marches and has never been part of the Imperium. Indeed, four major wars have been fought between the Zhodani Consulate and the Third Imperium.

The Zhodani Consulate is the largest of the human states and also the oldest. It is extraordinarily stable by human standards, and according to available evidence, internally peaceful. The Consulate has remained stable in terms of size for many hundreds of years; it is claimed that further expansion was curtailed when the Consulate reached the maximum size that could be effectively governed.



Relations with client states along the borders are reportedly good, though the distances involved mean that little information is available to Imperial analysts. It is known that the Zhodani are active in one area. Several large and many small expeditions have been launched over the centuries, all aimed down a corridor of space leading directly towards the Galactic Core. The purpose and result of these 'Core Expeditions' remains unknown.

The Zhodani are the only major human group to make extensive and open use of psionic powers. Testing for abilities is routine and apparently mandatory, and is central to the Zhodani system of government. The upper echelon of society are nobles, who are the only class entitled to vote in what is ostensibly a democratic system. Most of the work of governance is undertaken by the Intendant class, with the majority of the population being Proles.

Imperials view the open use of psionics with distrust and distaste, and dislike the idea that there is little upwards mobility for the average Prole. The only route is via psionics. All Prole children are tested for potential and if they have a suitable talent, they are taken away from their parents and placed with an Intendant family. The new Intendant will be raised in what amounts to the middle classes and can even hope to be elevated to the nobility.

Becoming a noble can be achieved by service or by victory in the three-yearly Psionic Games. Nobles wield the real power in Zhodani society. They both lead and govern, and elect from among their number the Consuls that rule all of Zhodani space.

This all seems very unfair to the typical Imperial citizen, who is used to at least the concept of upwards mobility by various means. The idea that a Zhodani might be reading his mind is also unsettling. However, to Zhodani this is the natural order of things. The Proles are well looked after and are given fulfilling tasks to do; their happiness and welfare are important concerns of the Intendants and Nobles.

Here, too, the average Imperial finds Zhodani society a bit sinister. Not only are social sciences developed to a high level but there is an organisation named '*Tvarchedl*' dedicated to finding unhappy people and 'curing' them of what is seen as a disease. Although their name translates as Guardians of Morality, most Imperials refer to the '*Tvarchedl*' as 'thought police'.

To the Zhodani, unhappiness is a disease and it is a comfort to know that there are people whose job it is to find out what is making the person miserable and either help him adjust his life to eliminate the cause of his unhappiness or else to make the mental adjustment needed to overcome him.

Most often, '*Tvarchedl*' operations take the form of helpful advice and psionically-assisted counselling. Mind-altering is actually much less common than Imperials imagine. It is usually reserved for those who are resistant to the gentler processes, such as those

who have a mental illness, or those who request it because they feel it is the only way to deal with their problems.

Most Zhodani are appalled by Imperial society, which they see as a chaotic mess of deceit and lies in which people are permitted or actually forced to live in a way that makes them miserable. To the Zhodani, this is neglect or abuse of the common populace and no amount of rhetoric about the free pursuit of happiness or advancement can conceal the fact that most people never find either and are forced to make the best of a fairly unpleasant set of circumstances.

An Imperial citizen who is unhappy in his office job is theoretically free to get a different one, but may find it impossible. He or she might also not realise exactly what it is that is causing their distress and end up pursuing pointless goals in the mistaken belief that this will help. A Zhodani in the same position would receive a visitor from the '*Tvarchedl*', who would help him or her figure out exactly what was causing the unhappiness. The 'thought policeman' would then either offer advice on how to eliminate that factor from the person's life, or would actively help the person find a different job where they would be happier. If that required retraining, then the '*Tvarchedl*' would fund or even provide it.

It might be that wider factors were at work, in which case a troublesome colleague might be reassigned or offered advice on how to better fit in with the work environment and stop upsetting his or her colleagues. Alternatively, if the office worker requested it, he or she might be offered therapy to adjust his or her viewpoint such that the aspects of the job or colleagues causing the problem might seem more palatable.

The Zhodani claim that their approach is very different from the sinister mental reprogramming many outsiders believe they engage in. They suggest that their methods are more enlightened, better for the unhappy person and all-round more effective than the Imperial system of simply letting people get on with it since nobody cares anyway. Imperials often shudder and start talking about sanctity of personality at this point.

Given these huge cultural differences and the Zhodani lack of interest in expansion, there is little interbreeding between Zhodani and other humans. As a result, there is a fairly distinct Zhodani physical appearance, which is an exception to the general trend. Zhodani tend to be tall and slim, and seem to exhibit psionic talents more commonly than other humans. This however, may be due to the fact that these are actively tested for and accepted in Zhodani society, which is not the case elsewhere.

## OTHER HUMANS

Most humans within the Marches (and the rest of the Imperium, with some exceptions) tend to be of mixed blood. Solomani, Vilani and many of the minor human groups have been interbreeding for centuries, creating a fairly 'generic' human type.



Cultural influences are generally more important than racial ones, though local conditions will influence the general characteristics of a planetary population over the centuries. Thus as already noted most cultural Vilani or Solomani are actually of mixed blood.

People being what they are, local associations tend to be more important than more distant ones. Thus the population of a given world tend to identify themselves as citizens of that world first and as Imperial citizens a long way second. Regional associations are sometimes important, such as when people identify with the Marches or Rhylanor Subsector, but even this is relatively uncommon.

A planet is a big place; about as big as most people can identify with. As a result, the average person identifies closely with their town or city, and their homeworld to a lesser extent. Far-off things like the fact that they are citizens of the Imperium rarely intrude into daily life for most people.

Cultural pollution has caused many worlds, especially those on major trade routes, to move towards a “standard–starfaring” culture, though even this is subject to local variations and tends to be more pronounced near the Starport than elsewhere. Some worlds are very different to this standard–starfaring culture. Diversity (within limits) is more frequent than commonality. However, radically different societies are normally either located in remote areas where there are few visitors, the product of deliberate isolationism, or both.

There are a number of minor human races. The Jonkeereen, for example, were genetically engineered by Imperial scientists. They breed true, creating a human offshoot race specifically tailored to survival in a desert environment. Their homeworld is in Deneb sector but they can be encountered anywhere. The Geonee are shorter and of heavier build than most other human types as a result of conditions on their homeworld. It is probable that the Geonee became adapted to the conditions there after being transplanted by the Ancients, though the Geonee have another explanation.

The Darrians, who are native to the Spinward Marches, are thought to have been genetically adapted by the Ancients in the distant past and today are one of the more important minor human races. The Darrians rule a small state on the Spinward fringe of Imperial space. This is their second interstellar polity; an ill–advised experiment involving their star ended the first.

#### OTHER TERRANS

Enhanced, that is sentient, versions of several Terran species have been created. Most notable and widespread are Dolphins, who inhabit the oceans of many worlds and travel among the stars when it suits them to do so. It is difficult for aquatic creatures to do so but technology has enabled Dolphins to join the starfaring races. Some Orca (Killer Whales) were also uplifted to sentience and can be found on various worlds, sometimes co–existing with Dolphins.

Among the other Terran species uplifted to sentience were various apes. These were, in general, less successful than the Dolphin project and have tended to fade away. Some worlds nearer Terran have populations of Apes, either in mainstream society or in enclaves living in remote areas. They are rarely encountered away from their homes, though the occasional Ape does turn up in an unexpected place.

It is also generally accepted that Solomani genetic experimentation created enhanced humans. These ‘Supermen’ were few in number and do not exist today. The Solomani Confederation is strangely reticent on the subject.

#### *Other Intelligent Species*

Charted Space contains a large number of non–human intelligent species. Some, such as the Jagd–Il–Jagd, are very alien indeed. They are gas giant dwellers and unlikely to be encountered far from their home system of Jagd in Lishun sector. Others share environmental needs with humans and can be encountered on the same worlds or even living in the same communities.

#### ASLAN

The first human explorers to encounter this humanoid race thought they looked somewhat lion–like and used the name ‘Aslan’ (Turkish for lion) to describe them. The label stuck and has been in use ever since, though the similarity is vague and Aslan have no connection with any Terran species, let alone the great cats.





The Aslan have a clan-based martial society, with over 4,000 clans making up the Aslan Hierate, a region of space located to Spinward of the main Imperium. Relative to the Spinward Marches, the Hierate lies to Spinward-Coreward across the Great Rift. The Aslan have considerable holdings on this side of the Rift however, and are not uncommon in the Marches.

Aslan society is divided along strict male/female lines. Males are leaders and warriors; females are businesspersons, scientists and technicians. The divide is so ingrained that some Aslan males are unable to understand the concept of money (or so they claim) and will address a female human soldier as male (fighting is a 'male' preserve) or a male scientist as a female (since the individual is in a 'female' role).

Aslan culture holds that only the first son inherits, so landless second sons (*Ihatei*) often go adventuring in search of land and glory. This can lead to friction with neighbours who do not appreciate the activities of the *Ihatei*.

### DROYNE

The Droyne are something of an oddity. They have enclaves scattered all across Charted Space. Some are stone-age primitives while others possess advanced starships mounting fearsome weaponry.

Vaguely humanoid with both reptilian and bird-like features, the Droyne are divided into six castes. Members of different castes have considerably different physical and mental characteristics depending upon their role in Droyne society.

The Droyne never explain their actions. At least, not in a way that makes sense to humans. At times they are quite active, with trade ships visiting many ports and other vessels sighted all over Charted Space. There have been many unexplained lulls in Droyne activity as well.

There are two Droyne worlds in the Marches, Andor and Candory. Both are interdicted by the Imperium. Permits to visit are supposedly available but are very hard to obtain. There are also a few small enclaves on other worlds. Visitors to these places are often completely ignored even if the Droyne communities can be found at all.

### HIVERS

Hivers resemble very large six-armed starfish and communicate visually by waggling their digits. Most wear a device called a Voder, which translates the waggles into Galanglic.

The Hivers are the 'first among equals' (or so they claim) in the Hive Federation, leading a wide assortment of other races. The Federation is far to Trailing-Rimward of the Marches on the far side of Imperial space, with a neutral area in between. Hivers are thus rare in the Marches, though they have been sighted.

### K'KREE

The K'Kree, or Centaurs, also dwell far to Trailing of the Marches across the entire Imperium and also a region of independent space. They are even more rarely seen in the Marches than the Hivers.

K'Kree are militant herbivores who have never made any secret of their 'manifest destiny' to wipe out all meat-eaters in the universe. This puts a strain on relations, though there is some trade and diplomatic contact between the Imperium and the 2000 Worlds of the K'Kree.

### VARGR

Vargr are candidates for the 'Other Terrans' label, but as a Major Race they are dealt with here instead. The Vargr were genetically engineered from Terran carnivores (the word Vargr means 'Wolf') in the distant past, presumably by the Ancients.

The Vargr dwell mainly to Coreward, in the Vargr Extents. This is a large area of Vargr and mostly-Vargr worlds forming large numbers of great and small polities that rarely remain stable for long. Many Vargr live in the Imperium; they are the second commonest species in the Spinward Marches.

Vargr are pack creatures whose culture and civilization are based around the concept of individuals with 'Charisma'; that is Alpha individuals. Vargr will give their loyalty to charismatic individuals and thus gain reflected glory, but a leader who loses face may find





himself without followers rather quickly. Vargr society tends to be somewhat more fluid and turbulent than human civilization, though Vargr are capable of deep loyalty to an individual or ideal that has earned it.

## **MINOR RACES**

There are many minor sentient races. Most are limited to a single world, and many have pre-industrial or even stone-age levels of technology. Others are starfarers. Many live alongside humans and others on dozens of worlds, having migrated to take a job or join a colonial mission.

Most minor races are naturally occurring species, though some are obviously variants or offshoots of other races. This might have been the work of the Ancients or could have other causes. Minor races sometimes cause a certain amount of head-scratching in the scientific community. For example, there may be two or more apparently identical species dwelling on homeworlds which are vastly distant from one another, with no evidence of a starfaring past.

Among the most commonly encountered minor races in Charted Space are the Bwaps (sometimes called Wabs or Newts). Their native-tongue name for themselves is Bawapakerwa-a-a-awapawab. Bwaps are small humanoids who originated in swampy terrain and need a humid environment to be comfortable. They are natural bureaucrats, and large numbers have entered the service of the Imperium as well as various worlds as administrators and accountants.

Chirpers (named for the calls they emit) are another minor race that can be encountered in various areas, though for different reasons. They are small and reclusive humanoids that exhibit some bird-like physical characteristics. Some observers suggest that they are little more than animals; others think that Chirpers are in fact very clever but not interested in the usual trappings of civilization. Chirpers are an oddity in that they seem to be native to many worlds all across Charted Space yet they have no technology or any sign of having ever possessed it.

There are many other minor races across Charted Space. Individuals and small groups from these species can be encountered going about their business almost anywhere.

## **THE ANCIENTS**

Little is known with any certainty about the Ancients, and it is probable that most of what is known will turn out to be inaccurate. Various theories have been put forward about them, most of which have insurmountable flaws.

Most scientists agree that the Ancients reached the height of their power several hundred thousand years ago, and that their



disappearance coincides with a fair amount of damage to this region of space. There are several asteroid belts and devastated worlds dating from that period. The most likely explanation is that they fought each other or someone else to mutual destruction.

Various Ancient devices and sites have been found, along with larger numbers of mistaken and outright fraudulent finds. Trade in Ancient artefacts is heavily restricted but there are always those who will pay top dollar for a working item.

The Ancients are thought to have been responsible for transplanting many species including humans and Vargr. They may have terraformed worlds or seeded them with life, and are probably responsible for the presence of Terran plants and animals on worlds only now being charted by humans.

The wonders of the Ancients are mostly lost, and those that can be found are often incomprehensible. Devices turn up that have no known function, and even those that can be used remain mysterious. The Ancients and their technology are something of a modern superstition; any unexplained phenomenon tends to be blamed on the Ancients.



# THE THIRD IMPERIUM

## OVERVIEW

The Third Imperium is a major power in Charted Space. It is over a thousand years old, and has weathered some difficult times to reach that great age. The Imperium claims direct lineage from both the First (Vilani) and the Second (Solomani) Imperium, giving it a legitimacy going back several thousand years.

The secret of the Imperium's longevity is its ability to absorb changes and even the occasional hard knock. Worlds have occasionally been captured by outside powers, wars both internal and external have caused great destruction in some areas, and crises have threatened to split the Imperium apart. Yet it endures. To understand how and why, it is necessary to comprehend both the nature of the Imperium and the long history of human empires in Charted Space.

The Third Imperium does not actually govern many worlds, at least not directly. Instead it rules 'the space between the stars' and has holdings on some worlds of which a small number are owned outright. However, even Capital is technically a member world of the Imperium rather than a possession of it.

Most of the territory claimed directly by the Imperium takes the form of enclaves on member worlds or else is located on planetoids or rockball worlds that nobody else lives on. In the latter case the whole body (planetoid, moon or planet) is usually considered to be Imperial territory and, as many of these bodies are the sites of Imperial bases, access by civilians tends to be restricted.

The Imperium is essentially a framework which permits member worlds to do more or less as they please within certain limits. So long as it upholds certain laws and pays its quota of taxes to the Imperium, a world and its population are entitled to create whatever social system, laws and style of government that they wish.

A few activities are not acceptable, such as harbouring Imperial felons or allowing slavery, but within the limits of the Imperial Charter worlds are free to pursue whatever course they see fit. They may even (under some circumstances and subject to certain limits) go to war with one another.

Individual member worlds provide for their own local defence, while the Imperium regulates commerce and maintains a powerful fleet to collectively defend the Imperium as a whole. This is a huge advantage for member worlds, as the Imperial Navy can afford vastly greater numbers of more powerful vessels than any given world, and in theory much of this fleet is available to deal with any given threat.

The Imperial military and other services are paid for from the tax quotas of worlds and also from interstellar commerce. The Imperium 'owns space' beyond the immediate environs of a given world, and commercial traffic must pass through that space. Revenue from commercial taxes, license fees and the like go into the Imperial coffers.

The result is a fairly loose framework that can tighten up at need. For example to deal with internal troubles, external threats or an economic crisis resources can be shifted from more stable areas until the situation is dealt with.

Overall, the Imperial system can best be described as a federation based upon mutual protection and economic well-being. The Imperium does not govern its member worlds directly. What it does it to protect them while they govern themselves.

## Historical Perspective

Charted Space is huge by human standards, but it is only one tiny corner of a vast galaxy among countless other galaxies. However, Charted Space is notable for one very important factor: it has sentient life.

Explorers have pushed out hundreds of parsecs in all directions and have found plenty of non-sentient life, but no self-aware people that did not originate somewhere in Charted Space have ever been encountered. This is not to say that there are no sentients out there somewhere, but there does seem to be a large region around Charted Space where sentient life has not developed. There are no satisfactory explanations for this phenomenon.

Thus Charted Space is a very special place. It is quite possibly the only island of sentient life in a galaxy devoid of thought. The history of the Third Imperium is, to a great extent, the history of this region.

## Antiquity

Little is known about the very distant past, and what is 'known' is actually inferred from archeological finds and other data that is very much open to interpretation. Thus it may be that what is today accepted as fact could turn out to be entirely wrong. The only certainty is that Imperial scientists do not know all that much about what Charted Space was like before the First Imperium arose.

It is generally accepted that some time in the far distant past the beings now known as the Ancients arose and undertook great works across the region. There are various theories about these people and what they did; all that is known for certain is that they are gone.



The Ancients are normally assumed to have created the Vargr, genetically engineering them from Terran canines. Another species, today known as humans, became widespread across Charted Space during the Ancients period and developed various engineered and natural variants. Some theorists believe that humans were the Ancients, or that the Ancients were humans, which has slightly different connotations. Some Vargr believe that their ancestors were the Ancients.

The unsuitability of many Ancient devices for human or Vargr use undermines these theories, however, but Ancient sites and artefacts have been found that are obviously intended for humans or Vargr. Proponents of the 'we are the Ancients' theories take this as proof of their claims and suggest that the other artefacts were created for the use of alien allies or servitors, or perhaps even for sale.

However, this is all conjecture. There is little proof that the scattering of devastated areas, new planetoid belts and bombardment patterns on various worlds across the region has anything to do with the Ancients, though since the damage coincides with the disappearance of the Ancients so far as anyone can tell, it seems likely that they fought someone else or one another and were either exterminated or greatly diminished.

Whatever the truth of the matter, engineered and unaltered humans were settled or were placed on many worlds in the distant past. Some of these cultures died out while others have done rather better. The two main transplanted groups eventually became the psionic Zhodani and the Vilani. Meanwhile, Humaniti continued to develop Terra and finally became the people known today as the Solomani.

Even less is known about what happened after the disappearance of the Ancients. There is little or no evidence of interstellar travel or even much in the way of civilization on the worlds of Charted Space. It is likely that the events of this period will never come to light. Eventually, however, humans stepped onto the galactic stage and a new era began.

### ***The First Imperium***

After tens of thousands of years in which the scattered people of Charted Space learned (or relearned) to make fire, to work metal and eventually to build cities, the people of Vland overcame the challenges presented by their world and built their first starships. It was a tough journey, and not merely because Vland is difficult world to live on.

Oral and written records speak of runaway war machines marauding about the surface of Vland trying to destroy one another for literally thousands of years, until their power finally ran out. The wreckage of these devices has been located; they are almost certainly Ancient artefacts, which lends credence to the destroyed-in-war theory. These war machines made it impossible for a city-based civilization to arise on Vland for a long time, but once they were gone the Vilani began the long climb back to the stars.

The Vilani explored nearby worlds and then began to forge an empire for themselves. This was the First Imperium, or the Ziru Sirka ('Grand Empire of Stars'). It dominated both the humans and non-humans of the region, and maintained its power through ruthless use of economic and military might.

Upstart civilizations on the borders of the Ziru Sirka were kept down by harsh treaties and harsher punishments for breaking them, or else were crushed utterly. By far the most violent period in the history of the First Imperium was the Consolidation Wars. This was a lengthy series of campaigns intended to ensure that no independent Jump-capable society existed near the borders of the Imperium.

Once the Consolidation Wars were over, Imperial attention turned inwards. Always more concerned with stability than growth, the First Imperium stagnated and became almost fossilized. Thus when new threats emerged on the borders they were largely ignored until it was far too late.

### ***The Second Imperium***

By the time the Terrans finally discovered Jump drive, the Ziru Sirka was in decline and had ceased to take much notice of what was happening beyond its borders. Border incidents gradually developed into a series of what to the Vilani was a string of trivial skirmishes that might just possibly be worth calling wars.

Border troubles were nothing new, nor was any real threat perceived from these newcomers. At first it was not realised that the tiny fleets of the Terran nations all came from the same homeworld. The Imperium thought it was simply brushing off the gnat-bites of a handful of barbarian worlds. Even after the Terrans united against their common foe, there was nothing to indicate that they were a credible threat.

To the Terrans, of course, this period looked rather different. Terra, along with her handful of colonies, was fighting for survival against an enemy whose sheer power was not yet perceived. During what became known as the Interstellar Wars, the Terrans frantically innovated, invented and reverse-engineered themselves a navy capable of inflicting a defeat on the Vilani fleets.

The Ziru Sirka was both stagnant and complacent; internal politics was far more important than barbarians at the gate. The continuance of the Empire was taken for granted; what mattered was how a defeat on the border could be presented in the best possible light, and how to gain political advantage from the situation.

Thus it was that internal matters occupied the attention of local and regional commanders who should have been dealing with what had now become a major threat. Cooperation was hampered by internal rivalries and a reluctance to lose face by asking for help. It is entirely likely that the Ziru Sirka was already well on its way to collapse when the Terrans began hammering on the gates.



Once the cracks became visible, the collapse of the Ziru Sirka happened fast. The Terrans, who had taken the name Solomani for themselves by this time, found that resistance to their fleets simply evaporated as they advanced. Only now realising how powerful their opponent was, the Solomani grabbed the opportunity with both hands and went for the throat before the Vilani could recover.

When the dust settled, the Solomani were in shaky control of the former Ziru Sirka. They lacked the ships and people to govern effectively but were assisted by the fact that much of the old Imperial structure remained intact. Thus the Second Imperium, as it became known, was essentially a Solomani-controlled overlay atop the previous structure.

That in itself was a serious problem, although it allowed short-term control to be established. The Ziru Sirka had been coming apart when the Solomani conquered it, and they were not able to replace its rotten foundations. Instead the Second Imperium, also known as the Rule of Man, was doomed from the start.

Today the Second Imperium is often referred to as the Ramshackle Empire. Its fall was gradual in terms of human lifetimes and the coming collapse may not have even been apparent. However, within four centuries the Second Imperium went the way of the first.

It was not war or disaster that ended the Ramshackle Empire but simply the collapse of its economy. Colonial expeditions were heading out into uncharted regions even as the Rule of Man spiralled into darkness, and some areas were in better shape than others, so it is hard to put an exact date on the final collapse. A couple of dates do stand out however.

In -1776 by the current Imperial calendar, a financial crisis triggered a huge depression and the near-total collapse of the banking system. This began a period known as the Twilight. By -1526 the last governmental body claiming to be the Rule of Man was gone and the period known as the Long Night began.

### ***The Long Night***

The period from -1526 to the founding of the Third Imperium in Year 0 is known as the Long Night. Various successor states emerged in the last days of the Rule of Man, but these were small and primarily concerned with short-term survival. Most lacked both the resources and the vision to lead a resurgence of interstellar society.

The beginning of the Long Night was characterised by piracy and warfare as the successor states battled over the wreckage of the Empire. Most worlds were not able to maintain their technological or industrial base without interstellar trade and a rapid technological slump ensued. Worlds went their own way or formed tiny pocket empires. On many less hospitable planets the population died out completely.

Interstellar travel fell off quickly. This was due to many factors; the lack of support facilities and shipyards, the danger inherent and the inevitable shrinking of horizons that resulted from the collapse of the Imperium.

There were still some high-tech worlds and even interstellar powers. Among them were the Sylean Federation and the Terran Mercantile Community. Here and there new powers emerged, but most disappeared into the darkness before the Long Night finally ended.

### ***The Third Imperium***

The Third Imperium was not founded as such but was 'restored' on Sylea by the arch-businessman Cleon Zhunastu, later Emperor Cleon I. Cleon's Third Imperium claimed legitimacy via direct descent from the Second and First, a claim generally accepted to be valid. More importantly, the Third Imperium had the military and economic capability to overcome the challenges it faced and establish itself as a major interstellar power.

The Sylean Federation at that time consisted of 30 or so worlds, and these formed the basis of the new Imperium. Their charter, which was largely a free-trade agreement with collective-defence clauses, formed the basis of the Imperial Charter. The planetary and business leaders of the Federation became the early nobility of the Imperium and many of today's noble families can trace their ancestry back to these individuals.

The new Imperium launched a military campaign to crush the warlords that nibbled at its borders, then began to reintegrate the worlds of what is now Core Sector. This was mostly a diplomatic and economic exercise, though there was some fighting.

Other sectors followed, and as the years rolled by the Third Imperium expanded to fill almost all the space available to it. These years were not without their troubles and eventually the Imperium decided upon a massive effort to find permanent solutions to its problems. Beginning in 76, the Pacification Campaigns as they became known were a combination of economic, diplomatic and military operations which brought many 'holdout' worlds into the Imperium and found solutions to most of the long-term problems plaguing Imperial expansion.

The Pacification Campaigns were over by 120, and marked the end of the rapid growth of the Imperium. From then on expansion was gradual, by a process referred to as 'border creep'. Eventually the borders came up against natural or political obstacles such as rifts or the outer edge of another polity's territory.

Numerous conflicts have erupted, mostly along the borders, since the end of the Pacification Campaigns. Some have even threatened to break the Imperium apart or slice off a segment of its territory. The first was the Julian War, fought against an alliance of human and Vargr states to Coreward of the Imperium. These formed the Julian





Protectorate and fought the Imperium to a bloody standstill before launching a surprise raid that destroyed two Imperial Navy depots. The resulting settlement, in 191, curtailed Imperial expansion to Coreward–Trailing and established the League of Antares as an autonomous Imperial territory.

The Imperium allows its members a great deal of leeway, but there is one action they are not permitted – planetary governments cannot secede. The world of Ilelish and several of its neighbours attempted to do just that and paid the price. Seeking autonomy as a means to escape a period of depression, Ilelish and her allies came out against the Imperium in open rebellion from 418–435. The Ilelish revolt, as it is known, was crushed and parts of Ilelish were sterilised by nuclear bombardment.

Meanwhile Imperial explorers and colonists had rounded the Coreward end of the Great Rift (in Corridor sector) and contacted the Zhodani. Tensions eventually led to a series of frontier wars. The first was from 589–604 and immediately afterwards the disaffected Admiral Olav Plankwell led his fleet to Capital and seized the throne.

The period from 604 to 622 is known as the Civil War or the ‘Barracks Emperors’ period. The Iridium Throne changed hands seventeen times in total – six times in 619 alone. The war was ended by Admiral Arbellatera Alkhalikoi, founder of the current ruling dynasty. Arbellatera did not seize the throne but instead appointed herself regent pending the selection of a suitable candidate. Her actions in restoring stability to the Imperium earned her the crown anyway, but it was given rather than grabbed.

In the years after the Civil War, the most important innovation in the Imperium was the Express Boat (Xboat) network which was first established in 624 and finally completed in 718. This network of way stations and tender bases permitted rapid information transmission via Xboats and vastly improved communications across Imperial space.

Meanwhile, the Solomani had begun to be troublesome. For many years the Imperial court had been dominated by Solomani interests, and a number of serious imbalances had been created. This in turn caused disaffection in other areas. In 679 the power of the Solomani was greatly reduced at the imperial court. Solomani influences remained strong but balance was restored with a corresponding improvement in stability in most areas.

However, the Solomani were now unhappy, and the diplomatic corps was unable to find a solution for a long time. Finally, in 704, a region roughly 50 parsecs in every direction from Terra was granted self-governance as the Solomani Autonomous Region. This brought an end to the worst of the Solomani unrest and the Imperium looked elsewhere, dealing with other problems. Among those was increased interest in psionic powers, which it was feared might lead to political sympathy towards the Zhodani. The Psionics

Suppressions, intended to counter this trend, ran from 800 to 826 and resulted in the closure of almost all psionic research and teaching establishments as well as the criminalisation of psionic power use.

Imperial attention was brought back Rimward by Solomani activities. Not content with autonomy within the Imperium, the Solomani Autonomous Region redefined itself in 871 as the Solomani Confederation; a declaration of independence in all but name. At first the Confederation and the Imperium retained the polite fiction that nothing had changed, but reports of Solomani repression of non-humans eventually became too much to ignore.

The situation gradually deteriorated and in 940 the Imperium revoked the autonomous status of the Solomani. This triggered a half-century of economic sanctions and diplomatic wrangling but changed little. However, in 989 the Solomani forced the issue, annexing all of the former Autonomous Region and some other worlds that had never been part of it.

The Confederation had hoped that the Imperium would be too distracted by internal events to act decisively. Emperor Styryx had just abdicated as a consequence of the mishandled Third Frontier War to Spinward–Coreward, but this did not prevent Emperor Gavin, Styryx’ successor, from declaring war against the Solomani Confederation.

The Solomani Rim War began in 990 and initially went well for the Solomani. However, after a period of stalemate the tide gradually turned. Terra fell to assault in 1002, though the campaign was exhausting for both sides. The resulting peace settlement established what remained of the Confederation as a distinct state, with the territories captured by Imperial forces being reintegrated into the Imperium.

Since 1002, there have been plenty of incidents and the occasional crisis, but only one major war. This was the Fourth Frontier War of 1082–84, which is sometimes referred to as the False War as the Zhodani advances mostly stalled at the border. By the time news of the war had reached Capital and instructions for its conduct had been sent back to the Spinward Marches an armistice was already in place.

The past few years have been fairly stable and there seems to be no reason to suppose that this might change. Some observers have suggested that the Imperium is enjoying a ‘golden age’ of peace and prosperity.

### ***The Imperium Today***

The modern Imperium is the result of centuries of history, and its nature varies considerably from place to place. These regional variations cannot override the Imperial Charter and associated High Laws, but they do colour local politics considerably.



The Imperium of today is primarily driven, as it always has been, by economic considerations. Worlds are free to govern themselves as they like and may spend their own tax income as they please on economic investment, defence and whatever else seems desirable. Obviously, the prosperity of the Imperium as a whole is increased by economic growth among the member worlds and this is encouraged with a system of subsidies, tax breaks and other incentives to spend money on economic development.

Although worlds are self-governing there needs to be a power structure for the Imperium as a whole. Various local organisations exist, such as postal unions and trade alliances, though military alliances between member worlds are not permitted. Disputes are resolved where possible at the local level, ideally between the disputing parties directly. However, matters such as tax collection and allocation of Imperial resources are dealt with at a higher level.

The very highest level of Imperial power is of course the Emperor himself and his immediate subordinates. At this level general policy is determined and passed down to those who implement it. Only very major issues are dealt with directly.

At the beginning of the Pacification Campaigns, the Imperium was divided into six Domains, each administered by an Archduke with overall responsibility for the area. A seventh Domain, the Domain of Deneb (which contains the Spinward Marches) was established in 589 but an Archduke was never appointed.

A Domain consists of four sectors of space, at least in theory. In practice some of the Domains extend outside the Imperial border. While the Archduke of that Domain is responsible for Imperial interactions with worlds and states beyond the border, no territorial claim is made or implied to these worlds. If they were to join the Imperium, they would naturally become part of the Domain.

Since the Civil War period, the Domain level of Imperial politics has been of relatively little importance. The power of the Archdukes was greatly reduced after the Civil War in an effort to prevent a repetition. It was felt that having several individuals in the Imperium with powers rivalling those of the Emperor was not desirable. However, since the Fourth Frontier War the current Emperor, Strephon, has reversed this trend somewhat.

Today the Domain level is once again a part of the power and taxation structure, but remains of relatively low importance. The Fourth Frontier War demonstrated the desirability of having a powerful individual close to any crisis point, prompting the Emperor to make the office of Archduke more than an honorary appointment. It is likely that the Domain of Deneb will eventually gain an Archduke for similar reasons.

However, at present the most important level of bureaucracy and power is the sector. There are four sectors to a Domain, and each sector contains sixteen subsectors. Again, this is theoretical; a

region that lies outside the Imperial border, such as District 268 in Spinward Marches sector, is considered to be part of the sector for astrographic purposes but is not part of the Imperial sector administration as it is not part of the Imperium.

The lowest level of Imperial administration is the subsector. As already noted, there are sixteen subsectors to a sector. Within a subsector there may be many or few worlds depending on local stellar density, and the importance of these varies considerably. Part or even all of a subsector may lie outside the Imperial border.

Worlds collect taxes according to whatever system is chosen, and pay a quota to the Imperium which is assessed by the Imperial bureaucracy. Part of this taxation is retained at the subsector level, part at the sector level and the remainder goes to the Imperial treasury. For many years the Domains have not been in this chain, but were recently given the right to impose taxes of their own. These largely come from commercial taxes imposed within their territories. These, too, are partially retained at subsector and sector level, part by the domain administration and the remainder goes to central Imperial funds.

Money flows the other way, too. Local projects are funded by the subsector treasury, those of wider importance by sector and domain funds. Grand Imperium-wide projects and matters of importance across the Imperium are funded by the central treasury.

Other issues are also dealt with by these strata of power. The Imperial Bureaucracy, Colonial Office and Ministry of Justice all maintain structures at subsector and sector (and recently, domain) levels which deal with increasingly important matters. The Imperial armed forces are also organised along subsector and sector levels. There is no domain-level military command.

The result is a feudal system on a grand scale. World governments pay taxes up the chain and receive support down it. Matters that can be dealt with at a given level are handled there, with the large resources of the sector, domain or Imperium levels available at need. For the most part, leaders and administrators at each level are able to leave details to those below them. Resources are allocated at need and may be sent as part of a high-level assistance package or loaned to the next-lower leader for the duration of the problem.

## ***THE IMPERIAL SYSTEM***

The Imperial system can be summed up as follows:

Member worlds govern themselves and pay a portion of their tax income to the Imperium. They are assigned a representative (who is an Imperial noble) to oversee their interactions with the Imperium as a whole and other worlds within it. Corporations and other power groups also have representatives of this sort. Representatives do not rule the world they are associated with but instead are a sort of ambassador and liaison officer whose job is to ensure that



the best interests of both Imperium and the individual world are safeguarded.

These representatives deal with one another at various levels, directly or at the courts of counts, dukes, archdukes and even the emperor himself. If an issue cannot be resolved at one level, it is taken higher until a solution can be found. It is not always possible to obtain a perfect resolution but the representative's job is to get the best deal he can for his world whilst being mindful of greater issues.

### ***Imperial High Law***

The Imperium has formulated a body of law that applies all across its territory and also applies on all member worlds. Even an anarchy world which has deliberately chosen to have no laws is bound by Imperial High Law, though it may entirely lack the will and the means to enforce it.

High Law mainly governs the interactions of world governments, large business groups and the Imperium itself. It sets out rules for who can give orders to whom, how the political/military chain of command is established and so forth, most of which is of no interest to the average traveller. Similarly, the large body of legal information on planetary tax quotas and the conduct of inter-governmental disputes (including limited wars) is unlikely to affect most people except peripherally.

Although member worlds are entitled to choose whatever governmental system they like, some things are not permitted by High Law and the Imperial Charter. Slavery is outlawed and a charter of rights for sentient beings is in force throughout the Imperium.

Governments and other accountable bodies do have some privileges under High Law that are denied to individuals. The right to maintain armed forces, to make and enforce laws, and similar governmental tasks are governed by High Law. World governments are, for example, permitted to maintain an arsenal of nuclear weapons. Very few civilian agencies can obtain permits for nuclear devices, and world governments can only issue permits to their own personnel. Only the Imperium can grant a license to, say, a mining corporation to use nuclear explosives and this is very strictly controlled.

High Law also specifically prohibits certain activities and limits others. Some acts are considered to be major crimes wherever they are committed. Piracy, rape, murder and treason against the Imperium are all examples of Imperial felonies. Even where a world government has jurisdiction but does not prohibit these acts, local law enforcement is required to assist Ministry of Justice personnel in apprehending the perpetrators.

High Law does not supersede local law, however. If an act is prohibited under local law but not High Law, it is still a crime. Moreover, someone convicted of a crime on one Imperial Member world is a convicted criminal everywhere, even in places where the act is not an offence. That said, some local crimes are considered to

be irrelevant in most other places. For example, while wearing green on Twoday may be a serious offence on one world, a conviction for this offence carries no real weight on worlds where the act is not prohibited.

The Imperium maintains a system of weapon permits which balances accountability against requirements. Almost anyone can buy and carry a civilian hand weapon for self-defence, provided the item is legal in their current locale. More powerful weapons are restricted for several reasons, not least because the Imperium prefers not to have weapons that can put holes in its troops' combat armour lying about everywhere.

As a general rule, more powerful weapons require greater accountability. It is relatively easy to obtain a permit for an assault rifle or submachinegun; all that is needed is a 'demonstrated need' such as security aboard a free trader. High-tech military weapons are more strictly controlled and generally require that the prospective owner be a member of a recognised mercenary unit. Very powerful weapons like grav tanks and plasma guns are not readily available to the public.

Some travellers think that they can go to a high-tech, low-law world and legally buy military-grade hardware. Most are disappointed to find out that they cannot as Imperial restrictions are still in place. There are various ways around this – a powerful patron might provide a license for military hardware, for example, or the weapons could simply be obtained illegally and kept hidden.

When a serviceperson leaves the Imperial armed forces, they often receive a 'weapon' benefit. This is more than simply being presented with their service rifle as a memento. The weapon comes with a permit to own the weapon, making it possible to obtain spares and ammunition legally. Service-weapon permits do not allow individuals to ignore local laws and carry weapons where they are not allowed, but many worlds allow honour-weapon owners to retain their weapon in their home. This is most common when the serviceperson has retired to a frontier area.

High Law also recognises that self-defence is sometimes necessary, and that force is often used in legitimate military operations. For mercenary troops and Imperial service personnel, the situation is fairly clear and in many cases they can be exempt from local law if they are on a legitimate mission under valid orders. For travellers defending themselves, local law still applies but at least the Imperium recognises their right to self-defence. Since travellers spend a lot of time beyond the jurisdiction of local law enforcement, this at least means they will not end up with the Ministry of Justice chasing them.

### ***Worlds of the Imperium***

Every world within the border of the Imperium is a member, though the exact terms of each world's treaty of membership can vary. Most worlds have a unified government that claims jurisdiction over the



whole planet, and it is with this government that other member worlds deal. If there are groups that reject the authority of the world government, this is considered a local matter unless it gets out of hand.

Replacing the world government does not invalidate Imperial membership; indeed, secession is simply not permitted. However, sometimes the membership treaty can be amended to cope with newly-arising circumstances.

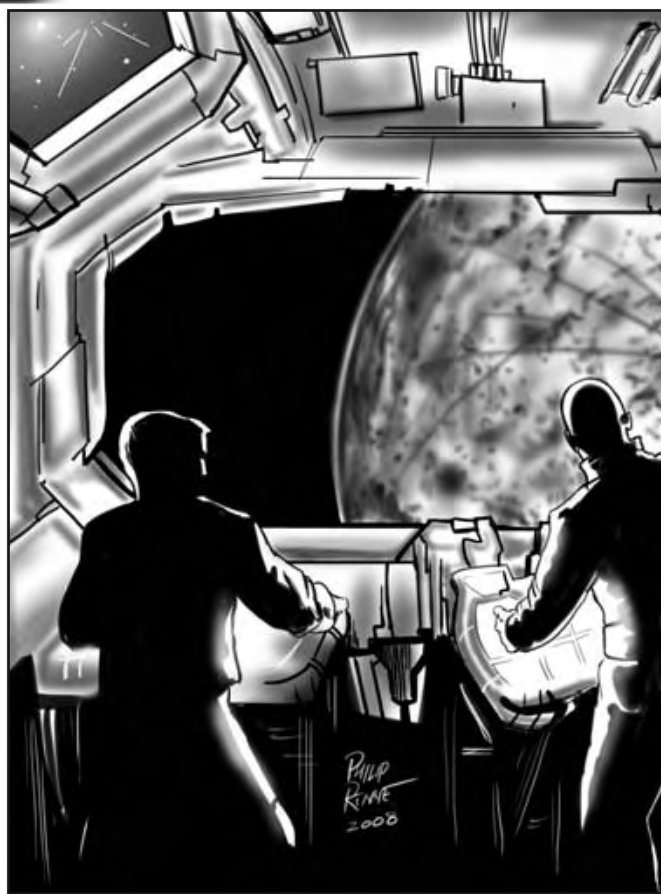
On Balkanized worlds, that is those with multiple governments, each state is recognised by the Imperium and has treaties with it. There are numerous worlds where not all of the planetary governments are Imperial members. The Imperium takes a long view; in time the member governments' increased prosperity will entice the others to join.

All member worlds have the right to provide for their own defence and to make whatever laws seem necessary, within certain broad limits. However, the Imperium retains the right to impose sanctions against a world whose government is taking 'inappropriate' actions, the definition of which can vary considerably according to circumstances. Worlds can face travel restrictions, economic sanctions or even total interdiction. In the latter case the Imperial Navy blockades the world and allows no traffic in or out. This can have very serious economic implications.

Under most circumstances world governments have jurisdiction in military and legal matters out to orbital space, defined as ten planetary diameters. From there to a hundred diameters is a zone of shared jurisdiction between the Imperium and the member world. Beyond one hundred diameters (the normal safe Jump limit) is Imperial territory.

However, member worlds have a right of navigation in their own star system (and throughout the rest of Imperial space too) and their system defence forces are of course free to range throughout the system. However, beyond the 100-diameter limit all actions are undertaken 'with Imperial permission'. Unless this has been formally withdrawn as part of a package of sanctions it is assumed to be in place.

Thus local craft can conduct customs boardings beyond the 100 diameter limit and can take action if local laws are being contravened, but only if they can show that the contraband goods are bound for their own world or are banned by Imperial law. It is not permissible to prosecute a merchant ship passing by on the way to another world where the goods are not illegal. If the ship lands or enters the 100-diameter zone, the situation is nebulous. However, most worlds are not concerned with goods destined elsewhere unless they are banned by Imperial law. Only the most rabidly high-law worlds will interfere with commerce in this manner, and they risk Imperial displeasure by doing so.



There is normally only one 'mainworld' in a star system. Other bodies (asteroids, moons and planets) may be home to small outposts or colonies but these are more likely to be possessions than states in their own right. Some of the outposts in a system may be owned by the mainworld government, and these are subject to the same laws as that world or whatever local regulations are in place.

The remainder of the star system is considered to be Imperial territory. Territorial claims to part of the system must be processed via the subsector administration. In the case where a mainworld makes a reasonable claim it will usually be upheld as a matter of course. Claims by other governments or organisations are less certain and usually involve some negotiation.

A world government that claims ownership of planets and moons in the neighbouring system will have to show very good reasons for the claim whereas a commercial organisation that wants a few square kilometres of real estate to build a mining installation is more likely to have its request granted.

As a rule smaller bodies such as planetoids tend to be wholly owned whereas segments of moons and planets are assigned. It is possible for several or even dozens of small mining concerns to be working claims in the same planetoid field or on the same moon. Each territory will have its own regulations and enforcement system which can be very different from that on the mainworld.



## **PLANETARY ARMED FORCES**

Most worlds have some kind of armed forces. This can range from a tribal chieftain's bodyguards armed with the finest in stone-axe technology to a major fleet of starships.

In practice, very few worlds maintain Jump-capable warships but many have some kind of 'system squadron' using locally built or imported vessels. Most system squadrons are basically patrol forces capable of policing the local spaceways and enforcing customs regulations. These are not usually able to defeat a serious military force. However, major worlds often have large system defence forces with large numbers of system defence boats and possibly several squadrons of monitors.

Whether or not a system defence force is available, most worlds have some kind of planetary army. This is normally divided into three 'commands'.

Close Orbit and Airspace Control Command (COACC) forces exist to defend the world's immediate orbital space as well as its atmospheric space. COACC forces generally operate a mix of ground-based weapons and aircraft as well as orbital combat craft.

Ground-based weapons include missile batteries and, on high-tech and rich worlds, deep-site meson guns hidden well beneath the planetary surface. Aerospace interceptors capable of reaching orbit are sometimes used as well as true orbital craft such as fighters and system defence boats. These are sometimes based on a convenient moon or orbital station, or may launch from ground stations.

Conventional aircraft are also used. These can engage intruder forces as they enter atmosphere and also conduct traditional air support and superiority roles. Bombers, fighters and logistics aircraft are the province of COACC.

Maritime Force Command is usually small to non-existent unless the world has a lot of oceans. Its personnel crew surface and subsurface combat and logistics vessels operating at sea. These can range from inflatable assault boats to major warships. Some worlds mount meson guns on deep-diving submarines, enabling them to hide in the seas and fire on enemy craft in orbit.

Ground Force Command is normally the largest of the armed forces. As a rule its units will be equipped to the local tech level, with elite formations possibly having access to imported high-tech weapons. Some worlds maintain formations equipped to Imperial Army standards, loaning these to the Imperial forces most of the time.

Ground Force Command includes all the traditional combat and support arms – infantry, artillery, armour, logistics, medical, engineering and the like – as well as special-forces units such as commandos and Protected Forces (ProtFors) troops for action aboard space vessels.

However, all this is limited by the locally available technology. The armed forces of a world equipped with biplanes and primitive armoured cars can be outgunned by a single high-tech infantry company. For this reason many worlds buy in a small quantity of high-tech gear or retain a mercenary force to provide a high-tech spearhead for local forces. The expense of arming an entire planetary force with imported gear is prohibitive, but there will usually be some more advanced weaponry available to governmental guard or elite units.

## **IMPERIAL HOLDINGS**

The Imperium possesses only a handful of entire planets. Most of these are outsystem rockballs used as naval installations or similar facilities. However, there are a few mainworlds that are Imperial territories rather than member worlds. Some are prison worlds, others are the personal fiefs of archdukes or the Emperor. There are also a number of 'reserve worlds' which are off-limits to outsiders for various reasons. Each of these types has its own regulations and in many cases access is restricted.

The Imperium also maintains large areas of territory on mainworlds. The most well-known example is the starport of each mainworld, which is technically Imperial territory. Outside the 'extrality line' local law and custom applies; within it a slightly different system is in force.

Most (but not all) starports and orbital installations maintain an Imperial-Standard law level. Sidearms and hand weapons are generally permitted but nothing heavier – though other weapons can of course be carried in cargo containers or transported onto a world that has a lower law level than the port.

Law enforcement is generally performed by employees of the Port Authority, who usually have extradition agreements with local law enforcement agencies and various courtesies in place such as the 'right of close pursuit'. This permits law enforcers from either side to pursue offenders across the extrality line and make an arrest. This is not always the case; on some worlds it really is possible to run across the extrality line to escape local police.

Sometimes the Imperium will lease an entire continent, a moon or some similar territory for use as a base. Whether situated on a mainworld or elsewhere, these governmental and military installations have stricter regulations than are in place at starports. Armed civilians are not normally allowed to wander about Imperial administrative centres, and restrictions are enforced by military personnel or security forces recruited for this purpose.

## **THE MEGACORPORATIONS**

While local commercial and industrial activity is important, especially that of the high-technology industrialized worlds, a very significant chunk of the funds that go into the Imperial treasury comes from multeworld corporations. Some of these are sufficiently enormous as to be referred to as Megacorporations.



The Megacorps have holdings on dozens or hundreds of worlds across the Imperium. Most are diversified in terms of activity as well as location, with interests in shipping, manufacturing, banking, research and other critical areas. The Megacorporations wield far more power than any given world government and in many cases could literally buy out a government if that seemed desirable.

Conflicts of interest between the Megacorps and world governments, or between different corporations, are inevitable from time to time. Outright trade wars have been fought between corporate assets, which include mercenary security forces and sometimes armed starships.

The Megacorporations wield enormous power due to their wealth and control of critical industries, and for another reason too. Many of the great nobles of the Imperium are shareholders or officers of the Megacorporations. This is hardly surprising as the Imperium was founded by a businessman and of its original nobility was made up of his allies and supporters. The Imperium is built upon economic activity, and many its leaders are captains of industry.

This can create conflicts of interest, and there are laws to limit how far a corporate noble can favour his own and his economic allies' interests. However, the simple fact is that money and power go together, and the Megacorporations have both in large quantities.

There are 13 Megacorporations within the Imperium, plus many more huge corporate entities. All are entitled to use the suffix 'LIC', which stands for Limited-liability Imperial Charter and designates corporate status. However, some corporations use a different suffix for stylistic or historical reasons. For example GSb uses the ancient Terran suffix AG to remind all and sundry of its claim to have been founded long before the Third Imperium.

Some Megacorporations have their regional headquarters at the domain, sector and subsector capitals; others use a similar system of tiers but maintain their bases elsewhere. It is not usually worth the trouble and cost of setting up a regional headquarters on some outsystem rockball, though there are security benefits for doing so. Most Megacorps have their offices at worlds that are major trade hubs, though there are exceptions. For example, if a corp owns a lot of interstellar shipping it may be worth setting up a private starport to house both the regional headquarters and maintenance yards.

There is no overall policy; Megacorporations tend to do what works best in the circumstances and will adapt to local conditions.

#### DELGADO TRADING, LIC

Delgado is the most recent of the Imperial Megacorporations, founded in 997. It started out as a manufacturer of military hardware and moved into other industries including mining and refining of heavy minerals, publishing, antiquities and toys. Delgado is well known for its work in miniaturisation and for its distinctly suspect employment practices.

Many of Delgado's subsidiaries, notably Delgado Shipping LIC, operate a two-tier employment system whereby a small proportion of employees are given high status and very good salaries while the rest are more or less blatantly exploited. Entry into the upper echelon is used as a 'carrot' to string hopefuls along while paying them well below the going rate. To those who make the jump to Favoured Employee status, Delgado is extremely generous, but there are a number of contractual 'sticks' which are used to beat troublesome employees with.

#### GENERAL PRODUCTS, LIC

General was formed by the merger of several manufacturing concerns after the Civil War. It is primarily concerned with heavy industry; notably the construction of starships and heavy machinery. It also manufactures a range of 'general basics' such as tools and kitchen implements which are adequate for their purpose and more importantly, cheap.

General has dominated the cheap-and-good-enough end of the market for many years, but has recently been at the centre of controversy as several of its starships have suffered serious defects. Poor build quality and lack of attention to detail have been blamed for the loss of several military and civilian starships, and General's fortunes have declined accordingly. There are rumours that General may shed its shipbuilding interests in some regions or may lose its Navy contracts if it does not meet new tighter standards.

#### GESCHICHTKREIS STERNSCIFFBAU AG

Abbreviated to GSbAG and commonly referred to as 'Gasbag' Geschichtkreis Sternschiffbau AG claims to have been founded in -2438 by the amalgamation of several Terran manufacturing firms. The earliest record of its existence is a contract with the Sylean Federation Navy dating from -334.

GSbAG is unusual for a Megacorporation in that it operates almost entirely in one business area; in this case shipbuilding. The firm builds ships for the Imperial family, among other prestigious clients, and is also well known as the constructor of expensive but luxurious yachts and passenger liners. GSbAG maintains a number of small research and development facilities and manufacturing plants making components for its vessels, but these all feed directly into the shipbuilding industry rather than being economically viable in their own right.

#### HORTALEZ ET CIE, LIC

Dating from the early 200s, Hortalez et Cie is a financial corporation which owns numerous businesses (including shares in other Megacorporations) but does not operate them under its own corporate identity. Its activities under its own name are almost exclusively limited to the financial sector.

Among other activities, Hortalez et Cie finances colonial operations, building projects and economic investments. It also deals in insurance and mercenary bonding as well as (in some regions)



servicing as a recruitment house for mercenaries, starship crews and similar personnel.

Hortalez bankrolls a lot of Imperial and local projects. In a frontier region like the Spinward Marches, Hortalez tends to be involved in funding starport development and economic expansion on developing worlds or recent colonies. In recent years it has shown an increasing reluctance to fund speculative trade expeditions beyond the Imperial frontier, though there have been a number of exceptions to this rule.

### INTELLARMS, LIC

Founded just after the Civil War by a former mercenary commander, Instellarms deals in weaponry and trained mercenary personnel. 'Excellent and only slightly overpriced' is the usual impression consumers gain of Instellarms' products.

It is still not clear how the firm's initial stocks of arms and equipment were obtained. There was a lot of surplus equipment on the market after the Civil War, of that there is no doubt. However, exactly where the money came from to buy it remains a mystery. The firm's early history is riddled with infractions and outright flouting of Imperial regulations on mercenary activities.

However, today Instellarms is almost disappointingly 'clean'. It deals in large-quantity sales to legitimate governments and even has an 'ethical arms sales' policy in some regions. There are more than ethical reasons why Instellarms will not sell to certain governments and organisations, however. Instellarms has several very lucrative contracts with the Imperial armed forces and these greatly outweigh the benefits of sales to rogue states.

Instellarms does not normally operate 'gun shops', though some of its subsidiaries do. A firm with contracts to provide hundreds of thousands of gauss rifles to the Imperial Army need not concern itself with selling a handgun to a passing Free Trader crewman. However, Instellarms does maintain large facilities on various worlds. These offer registration and accreditation for mercenary units and individual personnel, and often have contracts available. Weaponry can be test-fired and purchased at these outlets, though small orders are discouraged by high unit prices compared to bulk orders.

### LING STANDARD PRODUCTS, LIC

LSP started out as a mining concern and remains a major player in that field. Its mineral-mining operations have gradually expanded into related fields including asteroid mining, petroleum skimming from gas giant atmospheres, ore processing, bulk transportation and heavy industry.

In addition LSP is now active in the fields of electronics, computers and software, vehicles and high-technology equipment. Its starship components division manufactures mining and prospecting vessels



as well as starship weaponry, drives and power systems. LSP also produces a range of simple and easy-to-use power systems and machines aimed at the colonial market, and a cheap but effective range of smallarms that are also popular along the frontiers.

LSP operates a number of major mining installations either directly or as owned subsidiaries. Many of these are located in the outsystem, on moons or in planetoid fields which are claimed (sometimes quite aggressively) as company territory. Its activities are not restricted to Imperial space; LSP is actively sponsoring prospecting missions beyond the Imperial border and is known to own large shares in several extra-Imperial industrial and mining concerns.

### MAKHIDKARUN

Makhidkarun is one of three Megacorporations (Naasirka and Sharurshid being the others) that have their origins in the First Imperium. None was exactly a corporation during that period; they were termed 'Bureaus', each of which was responsible for overseeing a part of the Ziru Sirka. Economic activity was one of the key means by which the Vilani Imperium maintained its control over subject worlds, so the Bureaus were heavily involved in trade, commerce and industry.

Although the Bureaus were very similar in function and composition, each had unique characteristics which influenced its development during the primacy of the Vilani Imperium and in the centuries



since. Each of the bureaus was based on one of the three powerful groups in traditional Vilani society: the aristocracy, the merchants and the Shugili. The latter were experts in food production, and were vital to human survival on Vland as virtually every potential food item required extensive preparation to make it edible.

Makhidkarun was established by the aristocracy and was particularly interested in governance. Today this is reflected in its status as the premier supplier of luxury goods such as wines and gourmet foods. The communications division deals mainly in data processing equipment and data itself; particularly entertainment and art. Makhidkarun also supplies electronics and computer equipment to the Imperial armed forces and operates an asset-management service.

#### NAASIRKA

Naasirka is the second Vilani Bureau-turned-Megacorporation. Founded primarily by the Shugili, Naasirka moved into other areas when it became apparent that the specialist skills of the Shugili were only required on Vland itself and a few other, similarly borderline worlds. It was not possible to control food production on most worlds, where nothing more than rinsing or heating was necessary to make food edible.

Naasirka became a general and diversified corporation, dealing in electronics, software, computers and robotics as well as transportation and energy production. Naasirka is at the cutting edge of robotics and artificial-intelligence research and supplies most of the electronic and data-transfer equipment used by the Imperial Express-Boat service.

Naasirka maintains extensive manufacturing plants on many worlds and less well publicised research establishments in quieter areas. Many of these are located on moons or asteroids off the beaten path and are not welcoming to visitors.

#### SCHUNAMANN UND SOHN, AG

Also known as SuSAG, LIC, Schunamann und Sohn was first registered in 252 as an Imperial corporation. However, the firm had links to a defunct Sylean firm of much greater antiquity and still uses the AG suffix as a reminder of its pedigree.

SuSAG started out as a manufacturer of psionic-enhancing drugs, which was entirely acceptable in the early years of the Imperium but ceased to be something a reputable (or legal) firm would be involved with. SuSAG began to move into other areas just in time to avoid disaster as the PsionicsSuppressions kicked the bottom out of that particular market.

SuSAG is today the premier Imperial chemical and pharmaceutical corporation. Its biochemical warfare division has a particularly bad reputation for safety, which is not entirely undeserved. As a result

of a lot of bad press as well as concerns about security and safety, SuSAG normally sites its production and research plants in remote and uninhabited areas or on planetoids.

SuSAG has extensive interests outside the Imperium, and one of the largest Megacorporate security forces. The firm has shown that it is entirely willing to interfere in local affairs in order to protect its interests. It has also been accused of illegal research and continued involvement in psionic drugs production despite an Imperial injunction. To somewhat offset this bad reputation, SuSAG subsidises a number of medical charities and disaster-relief agencies as well as sponsoring large numbers of medical students.

#### SHARURSHID

The third of the Vilani Bureaus, Sharurshid was founded by the merchant caste and became a trading rather than manufacturing concern. To this day Sharurshid produces little but makes a vast amount of money buying and selling other firms' produce. In particular Sharurshid is famous for luxury goods, a sector where it competes vigorously with Makhidkarun.

Sharurshid operates a large fleet of trade ships, many of them plying long-distance routes to bring rare goods to the markets of the core worlds. The firm also operates brokerages on many starports, helping others make a profit for a modest percentage.

Sharurshid has few physical installations other than its offices and starships; it simply does not need them. If facilities are necessary then these can be leased for whatever term is required. Similarly, Sharurshid is less interested in making investments than in trade. Where, say, Hortalez et Cie will invest in a new manufacturing facility, Sharurshid is more likely to buy its products and sell them elsewhere.

#### STERNMETAL HORIZONS, LIC

Sternmetal competes with the somewhat more diversified Ling Standard Products for top slot in the mining and manufacturing sectors. The firm also undertakes some heavy engineering and construction projects. It manufactures power generation and transmission equipment for starship, vehicular, industrial and civil uses. Sternmetal is also the foremost producer of food synthesis equipment in the Imperium.

Sternmetal tends to do things on a large scale if they are worth doing at all. 'Corp Towns' are not uncommon where Sternmetal has brought an entire colony of workers and their families into an area or recruited them and provided a ready-made settlement. Living conditions are generally very good in the corp-towns, and in many cases they have expanded beyond the original application to become thriving cities in their own right.

#### TUKERA LINES, LIC

Tukera is the premier Imperial shipping corporation. In some areas it has a virtual monopoly on large-scale freighting and passenger





travel. Tukera's assets range from huge bulk freighters and impressive liners to specialised fast couriers and mid-sized mail ships.

The firm's revenue mostly comes from regular, dependable routes rather than speculative trade. Where Sharurshid has ships to enable it to trade, Tukera's vessels are the main source of its prosperity. Tukera protects its assets, personnel and interests quite aggressively. Most ships are armed and carry a well-trained security detail.

Tukera also operates a number of starports or sections of larger ports, and in many areas uses these assets to ensure preferential treatment for its own vessels and those of its associated companies. Of course, non-Tukera vessels are also permitted to use these ports, though they always come second to Tukera assets. Despite this, Tukera-owned ports are popular with starfarers for their good service and safe environment.

The earliest record of Tukera Lines dates from the Sylean Federation but the firm claims to be several centuries older, with a founding date sometime during the Rule of Man.

#### ZIRUNKARIISH

Zirunkariish is a Vilani firm, but one without roots in the great Bureaus. It was founded in -425, during the Long Night. Zirunkariish is primarily an investment and banking firm, and is the largest insurance under-writer in the Imperium. It also funds the development of mid-tech worlds and starports on major routes.

Zirunkariish is a majority shareholder in several major starport projects, though it rarely takes much interest in direct ownership. The firm is content to provide capital and take its profit, leaving management to others who are (hopefully) experts in the field.

Exactly how much Zirunkariish is worth, and how much influence it has, is open to speculation. With few physical assets it is difficult to make even a general estimate of the firm's value. However, the amount is staggeringly large – that much is certain.

In recent years Zirunkariish has been accused of manipulating the money markets due to its effective ownership of many worlds' hard currency reserves. Essentially the firm has loaned capital to a number of worlds, secured against their reserves. There is nothing wrong with this, it being standard practice. However, persistent rumours suggest that Zirunkariish is somehow using its influence over these worlds to create a favourable investment climate elsewhere.

## ***THE IMPERIAL NOBILITY***

The leadership of the Imperium is based on a feudal system, with knights and nobles of various ranks holding positions of power. However, although these nobles often have fiefs on a given planet,

they are very rarely the direct ruler of a world. Instead the nobility act as representatives of the various worlds (and also commercial interests, political and religious groups and the like) to the Imperium. In the case where an entire world is the personal fief of an Imperial noble, it is likely that there will still be some kind of local government and the world's Imperial representative will not usually be the fief-holding noble himself but a member of his retinue or a subordinate.

The Imperial system is designed to allow world governments and other powerful groups to work out their differences through representatives at the various levels of power. If a matter can be settled at the court of the local count, then that is an end to it. Wider issues are dealt with at the courts of dukes or archdukes, with the greatest issues being arbitrated at the Imperial Court.

Nobles of the same rank are theoretically equals, though in fact there are different ways that a noble can hold a certain rank and as a result two barons, for example, may wield very different kinds or amounts of power.

Note that the nobility do not dictate to the worlds of the Imperium. They represent their associated world, and advise its government, but if the world chooses to take a different path then the noble can only protest and advise of the likely consequences. If the world's actions are detrimental to the Imperium then the consequences may include economic sanctions or even interdiction by the Navy. In extreme cases the Imperium may even invade a world and replace its government, though this is rare.

Imperial intervention in the affairs of a world is occasionally sanctioned at the subsector level, but must be ratified at the sector level in this case. More commonly an intervention is ordered at sector level. The day may be coming when archdukes once again have the power to order an intervention but at present they are restricted to rubber-stamping the orders of the sector duke.

There are essentially two strands to the Imperial nobility: the peerage and the orders of knighthood. The peerage consists of the higher noble ranks: baron, marquis, count, duke and archduke. The orders of knighthood contain various ranks within them, such as Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Arrow, but there are really only two levels – knight and baronet.

Almost all ranks in the peerage are hereditary, passing to the holder's heir upon his or her death. Multiple titles can be split up among several heirs. Some orders of knighthood are hereditary, others are not. As a general rule the heir of a baronet becomes a hereditary knight.

The close family of a peer are considered to be members of the nobility and are often addressed by the title 'lord' or 'lady' followed by their name if they do not hold a title of their own. Many close



family members are knighted upon becoming adults and in that case are addressed as such. Knighthood-by-association of this sort is not hereditary as such but children of such knights will obviously also be close family of a great noble and will be knighted in turn if that is the local practice.

Inheriting a title is one way to gain one. Individuals can also be knighted or elevated to the peerage for merit or service, or in order to hold a particular job. Each year two lists of new nobles are published by the Emperor. The Holiday List is published on day 1 of the new year and the Birthday List on the Emperor's birthday. Most of the nobles created on these days are non-hereditary knights, though promotions to the peerage are also made at this time. Additional nobles can be created at any time if that suits the Emperor's needs.

When an individual is elevated to noble rank, they receive a patent of nobility which indicates their status, rank, and duties, and a letter of enfeoffment which confers ownership of any property that comes with the rank. They also swear loyalty to the Imperium and its Emperor. Noble rank can be revoked or suspended until the noble's heir is ready to receive it. A noble with multiple titles can lose one yet keep others, depending upon the infraction he or she has committed.

Many noble ranks come with additional benefits. The noble is often granted a fief of some kind, ie an area of land upon which to build a home and set up an estate. This may or may not generate wealth; if it does not then the noble will either be granted a stipend from the throne or, more commonly, property such as shares in a corporation. Nobles are expected to retain physical fiefs but a portfolio of shares can be traded as the noble prefers. The consequences of good or bad management will stand however; a noble family that impoverishes itself this way is not due any support.

Hereditary knights are usually assigned a fief. Non-hereditary knights may or may not be given a stipend but are rarely assigned land. Note that land, when it is assigned, is located on an imperial member world, but the government of that world does not answer to the noble. He may or may not be its representative (a noble assigned to represent a given world will usually be given a fief there) but he is a citizen of that world and subject to its laws. Special clauses usually allow the noble to maintain an armed bodyguard and security force at his estate even on worlds with strict laws, but this is not always the case.

Sometimes a fief is given as part of a task. For example a knight might be assigned a large area of wilderness on a frontier world as his personal estate, and assigned the task of colonising it with the eventual goal of creating an industrial city. If successful, the knight's family would eventually become very wealthy and probably be elevated to the peerage.

It is not necessary to be a noble to hold most Imperial offices. However, the senior officials of the Bureaucracy and the Diplomatic Corps are all peers or members of their close family. Virtually all

ambassadors and heads of administrative teams are at least knights. Sometimes a knighthood is awarded specifically so that a worthy individual can take up a post. Similarly, the Imperial armed forces contain a lot of nobles. These officers command by virtue of their naval or military rank, not their noble position.

The Navy is an excellent route into the nobility for a young person of good but non-noble family, and is also the place where many young nobles gain experience before taking up their political duties. The Marines and the Army have less noble officers, and those that exist are of generally lower noble rank. It is rare to meet a naval commodore who is not at the very least a knight, whereas there are many senior army generals who are not nobles. The Scout Service has virtually no nobles among its ranks.

### **Noble Rank**

The various levels of nobility are unofficially subdivided into three categories:

Individuals elevated for merit or performance in various fields are termed Honour Nobles. Business, entertainment, the Imperial services or exceptional performance in any other field can earn a knighthood or, less often, one of the lower ranks of the peerage (baron, marquis or count).

Individuals who hold a position are termed Rank Nobles. There are two subtypes. The term 'Local Nobility' is given to relatively minor nobles who represent worlds and other interests such as business groups. The rank is usually hereditary. Most local nobles are barons or, occasionally, marquises. Individuals who hold a non-hereditary Imperial office (e.g. an ambassador) and have been granted a title for that purpose are termed 'Administrators'. They retain their noble title after leaving the post but it is not hereditary unless of course the noble already held the requisite rank when the administrative post was assigned.

The smallest group, but the most powerful, are termed 'High Nobles' or the 'Great Nobility'. These are the most powerful Imperial families, who head the great Megacorporations or administer large areas of space. Most are dukes or archdukes, though there are a few very powerful counts among this select group. These individuals wield tremendous power through their position or their holdings, or both.

Actual noble titles are the same however the individual came by them. In theory two nobles of the same rank are equals, though they may have very different roles and levels of power.

### **THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD**

A knighthood entitles the holder to use the prefix 'Sir' before his or her name. Some females prefer the archaic 'Dame' and certain orders use this prefix for male and other genders as well, for traditional reasons. The initials of the knight's order are often listed after his or her name, and/or a location, such as 'Sir Alexandr of Skiddir'. Locations normally denote the knight's fief but occasionally refer



to the event that won their knighthood. This is usually the name of a city or world but can be something more unusual, such as 'Sir Andrea of Two Suns' which refers to a knighthood won at the Battle of Two Suns.

There are various orders of knighthood associated with regions or activities, all of which are considered to be generally equal in the grand scheme of things. Within a given order there may be ranks, in which case the Grand Master of an order obviously outranks someone recently inducted into it.

Examples include the Order of the Emperor's Household, the Order of the Starship and Crown and regional orders named for the domains, such as The Order of Antares. There is no Order of Deneb as no Archduke was ever appointed to that region.

Knights often receive a stipend rather than a fief. Most honour nobles receive neither; their knighthood is simply recognition of achievement. Those knights that do have a fief rarely receive a large area unless it is of low value. A knight might be given several hundred kilometres of wilderness, or a rather more desirable but smaller area on the edge of a major city.

Some orders of knighthood can only be bestowed by the holder of a certain office, the Archduke of Ilelish, for example, and others only by the Emperor himself.



#### BARONET

Technically a rank of knighthood, Baronet is sometimes considered the lowest peer rank instead. The name comes from an archaic Terran practice; a senior knight who led others in battle was permitted to display a banner for them to rally to, and was known as a 'Banneret'. The term was gradually corrupted to Baronet, though both are used in some regions.

A Baronet is essentially a highly ranked hereditary knight, who may or may not be given a fief. Baronets use the prefix 'Baronet' or occasionally 'Banneret' before their name and usually the location of their fief afterwards, for example Baronet Mikhal Danilo of Slovenos.

#### BARON

The lowest rank within the peerage is Baron. Barons usually have a fief of some kind. Those that are associated with a given world usually have their fief there. Barons usually represent relatively undeveloped or unimportant worlds. If a world achieves prominence its Imperial representative is usually promoted to Marquis.

Other barons are not representatives of a given world but may hold a fief on one. One baron might have received his rank for service and another because she heads a small but important shipping corporation. All are equal in precedence at the Imperial court as each has contributed to the Imperium in different ways.

Barons use the prefix 'Baron' or 'Baroness' and often a range of other honorifics such as 'hault', 'ap' or 'von' before their surname. As with knights, the Baron's fief location is often used as a suffix.

#### MARQUIS

An imperial Marquis is usually either a powerful businessperson or the representative of an important world. In the latter case the world's name is used after the noble's rank title, for example Marquis of Aramis or Marquis Aramis. Both usages are correct.

#### COUNT

A Count may be an extremely important Imperial officer, such as the ambassador to the Solomani Confederation, or the head of an important corporate body. Alternatively, a Count may be the Imperial administrator for a group of 2-3 worlds within a subsector. In the latter case the count's title is followed by the name of one of the worlds he or she is responsible for.

#### DUKE

Imperial dukes oversee an entire subsector of space and give political guidance to those at lower levels of power within that area. One of the dukes in a sector has precedence over the others and is titled Sector Duke. At present sector dukes answer to the Emperor but if the current reforms continue as planned their allegiance may be switched to the domain Archduke.



All dukes use the subsector they are associated with as a suffix, for example Duke of Rhylanor. This also applies to the Sector Duke who retains direct responsibility for his or her subsector as well as sector-wide concerns. Usually a member of the duke's family is appointed to deal with subsector matters.

### ARCHDUKE

Each of the six original domains of the Imperium has an Archduke, though for centuries this has been a figurehead appointment only. That is slowly changing as the Archdukes are given increased powers.

There is at present no domain-level structure in the Imperial navy or army, though bureaucratic and business apparatus exists at that level. The Archducal court is, in some regions, becoming useful as a place to resolve very high-level issues. However, this practice is only just becoming established and does not exist at all in the Domain of Deneb which has no Archduke.

An Archduke uses his or her Domain name as a suffix and is assigned an entire world as a personal fief. Technically the Emperor is also the Archduke of Sylea, and uses this title on some occasions, but Capital is not the Emperor's fief. Instead this is Usdiki in Gushemege sector; the Emperor can sometimes use the title Marquis Usdiki if he chooses.

The Archdukes can create nobles, but only within the ranks of the knighthood, that is knights and baronets. All other noble appointments are the preserve of the Imperial court.

### **The Imperial Family**

The Imperial family and close household are not part of the peerage as such, though many of them hold titles in their own right. Children of the Emperor and his close relatives are granted the rank of Prince or Princess, with the heir-apparent holding either the title of Imperial Prince/Princess or sometimes the archaic Grand Prince/Princess.

The Emperor's consort may be given the rank of prince or princess, or may retain their own noble title. It is fairly common, though incorrect, to refer to a consort as Emperor/Empress. Other members of the household use whatever noble rank they hold in their own right or else are knighted into the Order of the Emperor's Household.

Whilst technically the Emperor's son or daughter holds a higher station than a sector duke or even an archduke, the Imperial household are not in the political chain of command unless they hold specific titles in their own right. They are, however, hugely influential and well worth listening to. Members of the Imperial household are often given critical tasks and armed with an Imperial Warrant to carry them out. This grants whatever authority they need, albeit temporarily.

### **Duties, Powers and Responsibilities**

All nobles have some degree of influence that can be brought to bear in various ways, but the actual power wielded by a noble is more to do with their position than inherent to their rank. For example, an imperial duke is a very wealthy individual who almost certainly has large business holdings. He can exert influence through his titles and money, and possibly his shareholder position in a company. He can also give direct orders to those that answer to him, such as his household guards. He does not, however, have the right to give orders to planetary governments or Imperial forces, at least not by virtue of his noble rank alone.

However, many nobles hold their position as a job as well as a rank. The sector duke is the most senior noble in a given sector and has certain duties including overseeing political and administrative affairs in the sector. Military forces are commanded by admirals and generals (who may be nobles as well, but they command due to their military rank, not their noble titles), but as military force is an instrument of political will, the sector duke is closely involved in military operations.

It is important to understand the distinction to appreciate how the Imperial nobility works. The sector duke is a political leader who tells the naval commanders assigned to his sector what he needs doing and then lets them decide how to do it. He does not command the fleet in person and indeed cannot legally do so, though he can stand at the admiral's elbow offering 'advice'.

The same applies throughout the nobility. A noble who is the head of a corporation gives orders to the corporation as its head, not as a noble. He may also be an important political leader, but that is essentially a different job done by the same person. A noble title does not in and of itself grant the owner any measure of power. However, high noble rank is required to wield certain levels of power and is an indication of the level of power the individual controls.

All nobles, whatever their rank or reason for holding their titles, are required to uphold the honour and good name of the Imperium, and to embody the virtues of courage and service wherever necessary. This is interpreted rather widely; an elderly actor knighted for a lifetime of cinematic excellence would be held to a different standard to a knighted naval officer trained from birth to lead.

All nobles are bound by exactly the same laws as everyone else (though inevitably some do abuse their power and wealth), and do not officially have the power to give orders to anyone outside their immediate household. There are, however, three exceptions to this.

The first is where the noble has a specific task or office, such as a baron who is also a naval admiral in command of a task force. This individual can give orders to his own household as baron and to his naval forces as admiral, but there is a difference between these aspects of his rank. The baron-admiral would have no right to give orders to an Imperial Army colonel operating in the same theatre



unless he had been given or assumed control of a situation as the senior Imperial representative present.

The second is where the noble has been issued with an Imperial (or Archducal) Warrant. These documents grant specific powers to a named individual (who is usually but not always a noble) for the duration of a given task. Technically any job a noble is given, such as overseeing the interstellar trade in a region, comes with a warrant defining the task and powers associated with it. However, these are fairly routine assignments. In this context an Imperial Warrant is a little more than that.

A warrant is normally issued for a task that requires a fair amount of on-the-spot judgement and may result in the need for assets that could not be assigned ahead of time. For example, a noble might be issued a warrant to investigate allegations of corruption in the subsector bureaucracy. The warrant for this task would give the noble the right of access to local police and Ministry of Justice records and to 'borrow' personnel as needed. It might make provision for the noble to suspend government officials or even Imperial nobles. Trying to use this warrant to take command of an Imperial Navy cruiser would be pointless.

Some warrants are more open than others. There are rumours that 'blank warrants' exist, which essentially state that the bearer speaks with the Emperor's direct authority and can essentially take command of any assets, up to and including the Imperial bureaucracy or an entire battle fleet, if he feels the need. Only a handful have ever been reported and most of these were proven to be fakes. It may be that the 'blank warrant' never actually existed, though there are a number of entertainment vids on the subject.

The third circumstance is where a noble 'presumes authority' in a crisis. Technically, and by long precedent, those elevated to the nobility hold the Emperor's trust and are his direct representatives. Although they may have no official power in a given situation, a noble may step forward and start giving orders if it seems necessary.

The Imperium is based on traditions of individuals acting decisively and accepting the consequences of their actions, and as a rule tends to respect individuals – nobles or otherwise – who try to help. Local and planetary cultures vary but in many places people are expected to offer their skills at need. A doctor might reasonably offer first aid to an injured person, so it is logical that a noble who has been trained to lead should take charge if there is no-one better qualified.

This is as much a matter of personality as anything else; a natural or trained leader will lead, noble or not. However, when the question of chain of command comes up, noble rank can be important. No military officer will place his troops under the command of some random person in an expensive suit but a noble, as the emperor's representative, might be able to persuade others to accept his authority over the situation for the duration of the crisis. All involved will have to justify their actions, of course.

Thus taking control of a situation depends very much on the rank of the noble, his reputation, and his ability to persuade others to follow him. And of course, how much sense he's talking. As a general rule, an Imperial knight passing through a small backwater town when a major disaster breaks is more likely to be able to take charge – and to need to do so – than if he is caught up in a crisis somewhere that has a well-organised hierarchy in place.

Noble power is thus rather limited outside the noble's own sphere of influence. Many nobles do not even have a sphere of influence outside their own estates, though they may be able to exert influence through contacts, money and their name.

### ***Noble Courts and The Imperial Moot***

Traditionally the term 'court' meant a place where issues were resolved and disputes settled. The meaning drifted over the centuries, coming to refer to a court of law. However, the courts of Imperial nobles are indeed places where matters are resolved.

The court of a baron or even a marquis is a modest affair, if it even exists, but from the level of count upwards the courts of nobles become very important places where influence and favours are traded and issues resolved between representatives.

The usual practice is for worlds within a county (a count's area of responsibility) to maintain representatives at the count's court where they interact with liaison officers of major businesses active in the area, the Imperial armed forces, the Ministry of Justice and the Colonial Office as well as the ever-present Bureaucracy.

Representatives from the county are present at the subsector and sector ducal courts, and the archducal court if one exists. Of course, an individual world can maintain representatives at all these levels but it is expensive and not usually necessary. The hierarchy exists to filter out matters that can be dealt with at any given level from those that need to be taken to the next higher level. Imperium-wide matters are resolved at the Imperial court, which also serves as an Archducal court for the core sectors.

Each world of the Imperium is also entitled to representation in the Imperial Moot, which is distinct and different from the Emperor's court. The Moot is an advisory body which debates major issues and tries to present the Emperor with one or more workable solutions to choose from. It does not have many direct powers other than to ratify a claimant to the throne and the ability to dissolve the Imperium. This is not something to be done lightly, but it does provide a counterbalance to the power of the Emperor if necessary.

In practice, a wise Emperor listens to the Moot's recommendations. Going against them means ignoring the advice of a large gathering of the Imperial nobility (or their representatives), and these are the people who wield much of the power in the Imperium. Thus although the Moot itself does not have much power, its members do and should they decide to act in concert then even the Emperor



must take notice. The most successful periods in Imperial history were characterised by a good partnership between Emperor and Moot.

### ***Noble Houses***

The family, close retainers and some of the holdings of a noble are often referred to as a 'noble house'. Houses are sometimes identified by the family surname, for example House Miracru. The term is somewhat vague but generally encompasses family members and core interests. Thus the name House Miracru refers to Count Alaedon Miracru himself, his wife and children, his two sisters and their families, the family estate and its key business, Miracru Mining LIC because this is a family concern. Although House Miracru also has a majority share in the Deneb Materials Corporation, this is not considered part of House Miracru as it is not directly owned.

A noble house can have many direct assets and tends to have other holdings which are owned but not directly controlled. There will usually be a 'household' of variable size which includes family members, unrelated people who are closely involved with the house and a number of retainers.

The inner circle of a noble house are referred to as the retinue of the noble. These may include trusted bodyguards, tutors, business managers and the like. Some may be almost family, in that their own family has been associated with the noble house for generations. As a rule, a high-ranking noble tends to have a larger retinue than a knight or baron.

The retinue of a noble, though often non-nobles themselves, enjoy a special status by association with a prestigious noble house. They will accompany their noble to events and may even stand in for him or her at some of them. This position of trust gives a noble's retinue great power. It has been wisely said that the non-noble captain of a duke's bodyguards is a more influential individual than many Imperial barons.

The retinue will normally contain one or more bodyguards or officers of household troops, and there will usually be a security force as part of the household. This can range from a couple of bodyguards through the crew of an armed yacht to several regiments of household troops. The latter are, in most regions, named Huscarles. This word derives from an ancient Terran term for professional soldiers of high status who were part of a noble's household. The meaning has not changed much.

Outside the immediate retinue there are many retainers. These are basically people who are paid to work for the noble house. Some will be just that, employees, but many noble houses make a point of building loyalty among their retainers and staff and creating a feeling of belonging. Thus being a retainer of a noble house often feels slightly different to being an employee.

Not all nobles maintain household troops, and most of those that do have only a small force to protect their estate. Huscarles are retainers rather than members of the retinue, except for a very small group of personal guards. They are recruited like any other troops, though as with other staff most noble houses are careful about selection and try to build loyalty among their Huscarles. This results in a force with very high dedication and morale, often capable of performing beyond the level its numbers would indicate.

Huscarles are permitted in the Imperium under the same laws that allow for corporate security forces, mercenary units and the like. They are supposedly for the protection of the noble house's estate and assets, but are sometimes deployed for other purposes. Some sector and subsector dukes maintain a large force equipped as regular combat troops, and use them as a personal 'hammer' to back up Imperial forces at need or fill in when they are not available.

However, the huscarles of most noble houses are normally limited to a few light infantrymen. Forces above company size, and forces of any size equipped other than as infantry with some air defence capability, are unusual.

### **PLAYER NOBLES**

It is likely that a player-character noble will hold a fairly minor rank, such as a knight or baronet. More important people are unlikely to be hanging around with adventurers, and if they do travel it will normally be in the company of their retinue. This could be the basis of a Traveller game, but unless the players all want to play that sort of game it can be a problem.

Thus a player-character noble should not be adventuring as the head of a great household. It is normally better to assume that the character is away from the support of his family or house. Perhaps he belongs to an impoverished house, or is in disgrace. Perhaps he is a younger child who will not inherit, in which case he will not have the title his social standing implies but would go by 'Lord...' or possibly he will have a knighthood by virtue of his kinship to a great lord.

Alternatively, the noble player-character might be travelling to see the universe before he takes up the reins of power, or because the family have decided to pay him to be somewhere else. There are many reasons why this might happen, and most can be turned into adventure fodder.

Thus a player-character noble will not be able to command armies or Imperial ministries, nor bring to bear the resources of a noble house. However, he/she has a 'name' and with a bit of clever talking might be able to use that to advantage.

## ***THE IMPERIAL ARMED FORCES***

Although the individual member worlds of the Imperium provide for their own local defence, and both corporations and noble houses



are permitted to operate security forces, large-scale threats are dealt with by the Imperial armed forces.

There are three military forces: the Navy, the Marine Corps and the Army, though the marines generally operate under the control of a navy admiral when involved in large-scale operations. Organisation is by sector and subsector, following the general political structure of the Imperium.

The armed forces are commanded by officers who have risen through the ranks of their service. Many of these officers are nobles, but they command by virtue of their military rank and position in the chain of command rather than their noble titles. An Imperial baron serving as an army colonel would be outranked by a non-noble general. This situation is somewhat unlikely however, as senior officers tend also to be high-ranking nobles.

Nobles, even sector dukes and similarly important individuals, are not permitted to short-circuit the chain of command and give direct orders to military forces. The sector duke must go through the sector admiral rather than simply ordering a ship captain to perform a task. However, in a crisis some leeway is permitted; the captain might agree to follow the duke's 'suggestion' if it seemed like a good idea or if sufficient influence was brought to bear.

The chain of command is fairly simple. Political direction comes from the nobility, with the military as its instrument. The sector duke might say something like, 'Admiral, please be so good as to strengthen our naval presence along the Spinward-Coreward edge of the sector; I recommend at least another battle squadron and two or more cruiser squadrons'.

The admiral would then decide if this is possible and perhaps put forward a counter-recommendation or indicate why the deployment is not a good idea. Once a deployment is agreed, the admiral then sends orders to his subordinates to despatch squadrons to their new stations, who then instruct the individual captains.

The chain of command is important for many reasons, not least to prevent a noble from causing an incident by sending ships somewhere they should not be or stripping a vital region to cover somewhere else. Communication lags make it vital that commanders know where their assets are, which means that the services cannot afford to have multiple individuals giving orders.

The difference between political direction and military plans can be a slight one; representatives from the armed forces and the nobility will usually be present at high-level planning sessions. However, the distinction comes down to this: The armed forces are commanded by their own officers. Military operations are ordered by senior military officers in accordance with the political direction supplied by the Emperor's representatives, ie the nobility – in short, the nobility indicates what needs to be done and the military decides how and what assets will be used. There is of course always communication and an element of joint planning involved.

Whilst some military officers are also nobles, it is their current job that indicates which side of the fence they are on – the nobleman-commander of a military force is part of the military chain of command, while a noble who is a retired naval officer advising the sector duke is not. His advice may be well worth listening to but he cannot give direct orders.

The system works like this. The sector duke says something like: "We're being invaded. These key worlds must not fall and that trade route must stay open. I'd like to think we could halt the attackers about here..." The Navy responds by offering a plan which, after some discussion, is approved. The admiral then orders his fleet assets to their new locations and reports on progress to the sector duke.

At some point a matter may arise that is more political than military, such as the need to decide whether to retake certain territories or strengthen the defences of others. This is at least partly a political decision so the nobility needs to be consulted. However, purely military matters such as specific unit deployment are the sole province of military officers.

### ***The Imperial Navy***

The Imperial Navy is the 'Senior Service' in the Imperium. It is the most prestigious of services and is considered a good route to social advancement as well as a training-ground for young nobles.

The Navy is primarily concerned with maintaining the security of the spacelanes and defending the Imperium from invasion or lesser threats such as rebellion. It also upholds and enforces the law, conducts emergency relief operations and 'shows the flag' to remind member worlds that they belong to and are protected by the might of the Imperium.

To carry out these roles the Imperial Navy uses a wide array of vessels. The largest and most impressive are pure warfighting ships with tremendous armament and protection. Most of these are termed battleships, with the most capable being designated dreadnoughts.

Cruisers are the workhorse of the fleets. Smaller and less powerful than a capital ship (a battleship or dreadnought) they nevertheless carry extremely potent weapons. Virtually all cruisers and capital ships are built around a 'spinal mount', a super-huge weapon that runs the length of the vessel. The spinal mounts of cruisers are of necessity smaller than those of battleships but are capable of damaging even a capital vessel.

There are many types of cruisers. As well as heavy and light general-purpose cruisers, the navy makes use of strike cruisers, armoured cruisers, long-range 'rift' cruisers and a range of specialist vessels for various purposes. Most fleets include numerous cruisers but they can also be found operating alone or at the head of a task force. An Imperial Navy cruiser is a very potent vessel and can deal with



many problems on its own. Many smaller navies are outgunned by a single heavy cruiser.

The navy also maintains a large number of escort vessels of many types. The largest of these include destroyers and fleet escorts. Some are pure escort ships, designed to keep light craft and missiles away from the capital units. Others are general-purpose ships capable of carrying out a range of missions. Destroyers are the largest navy ships commonly encountered on patrol.

Smaller escorts do exist, right down to ships like the Close Escort or Patrol Cruiser (a long-standing misnomer; this tiny vessel is an escort rather than a cruiser). These are the ships that do most of the navy's work; patrol, piracy suppression, guardship duty and the like. They also escort and protect larger vessels. There are never enough escorts; the navy budget is huge but most of it is spent on the capital ships and cruisers needed to prevent invasion by major powers. Small ships for internal security are a lower priority.

The fleet also makes use of a range of carriers. Most are cruiser-sized vessels capable of deploying dozens of fighters. The latter are of very limited use in battle but can intercept missiles and other small craft. Their primary role is security; a carrier can set up a wide range of radar pickets with its fighter contingent and can deal with most policing and security missions – a wing of fighters is more than a match for the typical armed freighter used by pirates, or even an escort-sized warship.

Another class of vessel, the battle tender, carries fighters, though these are not its main striking arm. That distinction goes to a squadron (3–5 usually) of 'battle riders'. These are non-Jump capable warships which do not need to devote space to Jump drives or fuel and so can carry the same weapons fit as a battleship on a much smaller hull.

Other large non-Jump capable warships are termed monitors. These are restricted to a single star system but provide a powerful defensive capability for a modest cost. The navy sometimes deploys battle riders in this role. Smaller non-Jump capable warships are termed System Defence Boats and are often deployed in large numbers to patrol and protect a system.

The navy also operates a range of support ships; couriers, auxiliaries, hospital ships, logistics vessels, fuel tankers, scouts and troop transports to carry army or marine assets.

The navy is divided for administrative purposes into Sector Fleets and Subsector Fleets. Sector fleets are named for their home sector and maintain a headquarters there, usually at a system-wide naval depot. This star system is usually but not always named for the sector, such as Depot/Lishun or Depot/Illeish. The depot system is heavily defended, often by non-Jump capable vessels such as monitors and system defence boats. Most of the time significant elements of the sector fleet will also be present.

There are also normally several naval bases throughout a sector. These are more modest and can vary from a small installation serving a patrol flotilla to the home port of several battle squadrons.

Most of the sector fleet's capital ships, those capable of fighting a major action such as battleships, dreadnoughts and fleet carriers, are concentrated at the depot, with the remainder deployed in smaller battle forces at naval bases across the region. Capital ships are kept concentrated to deal with major threats and are rarely seen away from a major fleet. Most of the sector fleet's cruiser strength is also kept concentrated, though cruiser squadrons (CruRons) are more often deployed to smaller bases than battle squadrons (BatRons).

Each Sector Fleet commander also has responsibility for a Subsector Fleet corresponding to each subsector within the sector. This is nominally 16 but of course in a sector like the Marches there are no subsector fleets for subsectors lying outside the Imperium.

Subsector fleets are numbered rather than named and are commanded by a lower ranking admiral who answers to the sector commander. Where the sector fleet contains most of the major warships assigned to the region, the subsector fleet is more concerned with local affairs. It has been said that sector fleets fight wars while subsector fleets keep the peace and protect commerce.





For this reason a subsector fleet usually has a single cruiser as flagship and deploys mainly escorts and destroyers for patrol and commerce-protection work. Of course, if a major incident arises, the sector fleet is there to deal with it, and often vessels are loaned from sector command to the subsector admiral's control.

Other fleet types can be created. For example, in wartime strike fleets or battle fleets might be formed. Often the assets to create these are loaned by other sector fleets, with the vessels returning to their 'home' sectors when the war is over.

Most of the time, travellers will encounter the smaller vessels of the navy on patrol, conducting boardings and customs inspections, and in port between missions. Personnel on liberty can be found around any port where a naval ship is docked. Recruiting offices and liaison personnel are commonplace in the larger ports. Some worlds also have naval installations co-located with their starport. These range from bases for naval ships to specialist installations such as logistics staging posts, repair yards or training grounds for new recruits.

Occasionally travellers might see a fleet on exercise or encounter an interdiction patrol. The latter exists to keep unauthorised personnel and ships away from a 'red zoned' world, ie one to which civilian access is restricted. Most naval installations can also be considered 'red zones'; ships approaching are usually boarded and searched if they cannot explain their presence and will normally be turned around and sent on their way unless they have the correct permits. Ignoring a red zone is grounds for the navy to fire on a vessel, though less aggressive methods are tried first.

### THE COLONIAL FLEETS

The Imperial Navy is backed up by the so-called Colonial Fleets. The name is archaic, probably dating from the Interstellar Wars period; very few of the worlds that contribute to this part of the fleet are colonies as such.

The colonial fleet is essentially a framework to allow the assets of various worlds and organisations to be called up to assist the Imperial Navy at need.

Worlds are permitted to maintain their own fleets for local defence. Most settle for an orbital defence force and possibly a force capable of patrolling their home system (collectively termed a 'system squadron'), possibly backed up by a Jump-capable patrol vessel or two as status symbols and/or for commerce protection.

However, some worlds maintain rather larger naval forces. There are various reasons for this, with status being the main one. Almost no worlds have battleships (though some buy old capital ships and gut their drives to create a super-monitor to defend the system)

and few possess even cruisers. There is simply not enough need for such expensive assets. However, forces of destroyers and escorts are not uncommon for rich worlds, and these can be called upon for service with the colonial fleet.

In addition, some nobles maintain a number of small warships as part of their household forces and many corporations have armed ships to protect their assets. Mercenary vessels can be hired and many armed traders have a naval-auxiliary contract, trading a maintenance discount for the chance of being called for military service. Ships are also sometimes borrowed from the Scout Service.

This rather random pool of naval assets is administered by the colonial fleet administration, which calls up vessels as needed. In peacetime, this is limited to the odd resupply mission for an armed trader or a handful of escorts called up to strengthen anti-piracy patrols. In wartime, the colonial fleet is generally used to replace the more capable vessels of the Imperial Navy on convoy-escort and patrol duty, freeing them for fleet service.

Larger colonial-fleet vessels such as cruisers and destroyers are generally grouped into combat squadrons in wartime. They tend to be older ships bought as surplus by their new owners and in less than ideal condition, but extra hulls are always welcome.

The colonial fleet also keeps track of the 'Reserve Fleet'. This consists of a pool of naval reservists and personnel who have left the service but remain available for reactivation, and a collection of 'mothballed' warships maintained at the depot and naval bases. Surplus capital ships tend to end up in mothballs rather than being bought up by private users as escorts. Thus the navy has a pool of capital ships and cruisers (and also some smaller vessels) that can be theoretically reactivated.

Many of these mothballed ships are in very poor condition and some cannot be made combat-worthy, but the same could be said of the reservists called up to crew them. However, given time it is possible to create several extra BatRons and CruRons from the Reserve Fleet. Ships (and personnel) tend to be of older designs and may lack the edge of efficiency of newer and younger assets, so ideally they are used in lower-threat areas to free more potent assets. The reserve fleet has however fought some tough actions, and probably will again.

### *The Imperial Marine Corps*

The Marine Corps has two main functions. On the one hand it is a 'hammer' to smash problems flat with overwhelming firepower. On the other, its personnel act as ship's troops for naval vessels and guard important installations. By tradition, marines guard Imperial embassies and provide an honour-guard to ambassadors.



The Marine Corps does not possess warships of its own, but it does operate armed troopships and assault transports. These have flight crews 'on loan' from the navy but are under Marine Corps direction. Marines do fly fighters and shuttles, and are trained in interface operations wherein they might provide close support to ground troops before climbing back to orbit to defend the transports.

The Marine Corps is primarily an infantry force. Every marine is trained as a rifleman and learns cutlass drill for ceremonial purposes. The cutlass is carried during boardings as a broad hint more than anything else; if trouble erupts then firearms are normally preferred. Marines serving as ship's troops provide security for the vessel and act as escorts for officers undertaking liaison tasks or work parties if it seems necessary. Most ships, like most embassies, have only a small detachment of marines available.

Larger forces are created as necessary, but it is more common for marines to deploy even to a war zone as companies and battalions rather than brigades and divisions. The marines emphasise fast-moving, hard-hitting short-term actions, often by firepower-heavy but outnumbered forces. If a longer-term capability is required then the army is normally deployed instead. Marine support, artillery, armour and similar formations do exist but they are not numerous.

The most common image of the Imperial Marine Corps is a fairly small force of marines, equipped with battle dress (powered armour)

conducting an infantry assault on a target. Such affairs tend to be over very quickly; the Marine Corps does not mess about. However, not all marines are trained to use battle dress and a smaller proportion are actually equipped with it. Battledress-equipped marine forces are used as a spearhead when available, but require a great deal of support to keep them effective in the field. Fortunately, shipboard workshops are available to accompany battledress-equipped forces wherever they are deployed.

Marines are most commonly encountered guarding the Imperial embassy at a starport or conducting boardings to inspect cargo or ship's papers. All naval bases have a contingent of marines assigned for both the defence of the base and any missions that may require a rapid-reaction force.

### ***The Imperial Army***

The Imperial Army is organised somewhat similarly to the navy, with regional command structures at the subsector and sector level. The former tend to be small; little more than headquarters and liaison units.

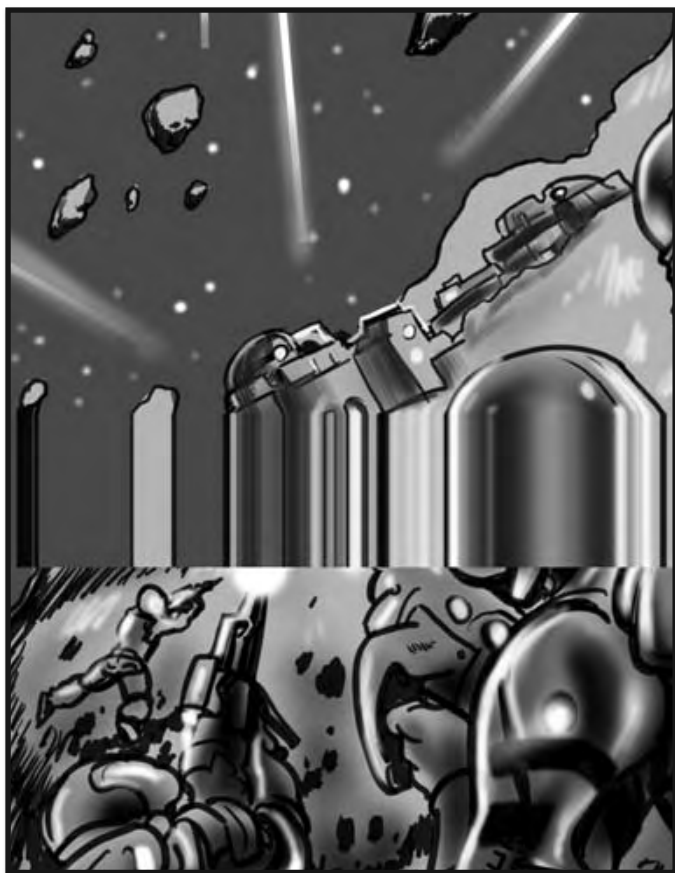
Unlike the navy, the army is not ubiquitous. Its manpower numbers are huge, but these are concentrated at bases for the most part. The army does have a security role but its assets tend to be deployed to trouble spots rather than engaging in flag-showing operations.

Most worlds have some form of ground forces for their own defence and security, and quite often the Imperial Army will provide liaison or training assets to an important world. However, the majority of planets are not guarded or defended by the army. Instead they rely on their local forces, which can be equipped and organised in any way the world can afford and thinks is appropriate.

The Imperial forces, however, are mostly equipped to a uniform standard. Some specialist units do exist, mainly of a special-forces nature, which have equipment geared to their role. One example would be a unit drawn from an aquatic species and specialised in underwater combat.

Imperial army formations use combined-arms techniques; artillery, grav armour and aerospace defence assets are integrated into the force at various levels. Most Imperial army units are lift infantry formations. That is, a primarily infantry force with grav vehicles for mobility. The infantry ride in grav armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and are equipped with combat armour and advanced combat rifles plus support weapons. The formation will usually contain several grav sleds carrying electronic warfare and artillery weapons, and there will usually be some tanks available unless the force is very small.

Other common formations include light infantry (optimised for peacekeeping and urban combat operations), grav cavalry (light armoured striking and reconnaissance formations), armoured





infantry (infantry formations with a large tank force attached) and grav armour (a primarily armoured force with some infantry for mutual support). In addition, the army maintains among its ground forces a range of support formations such as electronic warfare units, field hospitals and engineering formations.

However, there is more to the Imperial Army than this. The term 'army' might better be replaced with something like 'planetside combat force', as the army also fights on and under the surface of water. Maritime forces tend to be smaller than 'ground' forces but this depends on the nature of the world being fought on. Maritime formations range from combat divers or aquatic-species infantry to surface ships and submarines.

The army is also capable of conducting aerospace and close-orbit operations. While in theory any grav tank or APC can reach orbit, they normally stay close to the ground for protection and concealment. Aerospace assets include strike aircraft, orbital interceptors and high-speed grav craft as well as tracking gear and ground-to orbit missiles.

Not all worlds have a breathable atmosphere, so the army maintains a large Protected Forces (ProtFors) contingent trained to operate in harsh environments. ProtFors is something of an elite assignment and units tend to be of a very high standard.

### MERCENARIES, HUSCARLES AND CORPORATE FORCES

As already noted, corporations, nobles and other groups are entitled to provide for their own defence. Normally this means maintaining a few bodyguards or a handful of paramilitary security troops to protect an installation or estate. However, larger military units do exist.

Some worlds maintain military formations equipped and trained to Imperial Army standards. There are various reasons for this, such as status, but the commonest is to ensure that the world's armed forces gain some operational experience even in peacetime. Some powerful nobles maintain units for a similar purpose.

Thus it is possible to encounter an imperial army force which contains a battalion on loan from a corporation, noble house or planetary government, or a mercenary unit on contract to the Imperial Army. In all such cases the unit will have been sworn in (perhaps temporarily) as a unit of the Emperor's armed forces and will be under the command of regular army generals.

Mercenary forces range from individuals and small teams through platoon, company and even battalion sized units. Larger formations are extremely rare. Equipment varies considerably. Mid-tech units are much cheaper to hire than top-end formations, and are entirely adequate for peacekeeping duty or on mid or low-tech worlds.

Many mercs are ex-Imperial army personnel and most are serious professionals who give good value for money. There are fanatics, thugs and wackjobs-for-hire on the merc circuit, but for the most part the licensing and bonding process weeds the worst of these out. A unit that has been hired for Imperial service can usually command a higher fee afterward as this is generally seen as a guarantee of quality.

## ***THE IMPERIAL SERVICES***

The armed forces defend and protect the Imperium, but the other services keep it running. Often they go unnoticed, but the bureaucracy and other services are vital to the daily function of the Imperium. As a general rule noble rank is necessary to hold high office in the services, and can be gained as a reward for service. The Scouts are an exception; the egalitarian and generally maverick nature of scouts means that few nobles join and fewer are created.

### ***The Imperial Bureaucracy***

Perhaps the most important single component of the Imperium is the Bureaucracy. Although the name suggests a stuffy, bean-counting collection of accountants and clerks, this image is only about 99% true. The Bureaucracy does occasionally have an exciting job, such as when investigating an organisation or world government that has something to hide or is falsifying its imperial tax accounts. Things can become life-threateningly interesting in such cases.

The life of an Imperial bureaucrat is, however, a stable and comfortable one most of the time. It is a solid career offering a good salary and benefits and the chance to meet important people once in a while. The vast majority of personnel are the sort that find this lifestyle attractive. It is also probably true that more rebellions and crises have been averted by good accounting practices and timely reporting of budget anomalies than have been smashed by the navy. To those who want to make a difference without being shot at in the process, the Bureaucracy offers a chance to serve and be rewarded without taking undue risks.

However, what many people forget is that the Bureaucracy is actually the Imperial administrative apparatus. That is, it contains the sector and subsector dukes who make the big decisions, and the power-brokers that make billion-credit deals every day. Imperial bureaucrats do get sent on hazardous missions. Nobody builds statues to records clerks and accountants, but there are those in the Bureaucracy whose names are known to billions.

### ***The Imperial Colonial Office***

The Colonial Office (usually abbreviated ICO) administers 'colonial territories', a catch-all term for Imperial possessions and worlds that are being opened up for colonization. As such, its main areas of interest are along the borders. However, it is also responsible for overseeing areas within the Imperium such as prison worlds, reserve



worlds maintained by the Imperium and the territories (sometimes whole planets) leased as sites for naval and army bases.

ICO deals with the selection and training of colonists for new sites and the registry of mining claims that are not on worlds with an Imperial-member government. This includes outsystem planetoids and wilderness areas of colony worlds. ICO will provide administrators, specialists and even a planetary governor to a colonial mission if it is either an Imperial operation or if the backers decide that going through ICO is the best option.

Technically, the office is also responsible for the itinerant Belter communities that are not citizens of any given world. In practice this is restricted to registering births and deaths if and when they are reported and assigning Imperial ID to Belters who do not have a homeworld government to do it for them. Such people are assigned ID as 'Imperial Citizens' rather than as citizens of any given world. This is usually the last involvement ICO has with them before filing a death certificate some time later. Many Belters are very lax about this, so accurate records are not possible.

### ***The Diplomatic Service***

The diplomatic service is one of the smallest Imperial agencies in terms of numbers employed, but it is extremely important. The diplomatic service acts as liaison between world governments, corporate bodies, external states and the Imperium itself. It provides an ambassador or liaison official and a small staff to many worlds. These personnel are normally located at the capital and/or the starport. Some of them assist the planet's noble representative while others have a different role.

The main function of diplomatic service personnel is to help Imperial citizens from offworld stay out of local trouble and to assist in dealing with any issues that might arise. Most starports at worlds with unusual or very strict laws have an advisory service in place, which usually publishes simple guides to staying on the right side of the law. The diplomatic service also has a number of lawyers available, though normally only at worlds where they are likely to be needed.

Note that the diplomatic service does not help Imperial citizens to get away with committing crimes on member worlds; rather it tries to prevent well-intentioned people from making mistakes through ignorance of the law. Actual criminals can take their chances.

At a higher level, the diplomatic service maintains embassies at worlds along the border and with foreign states. The ambassadors at these sites are very powerful individuals who may be called upon to negotiate on behalf of the Imperium. High noble rank is required for these posts.

### ***The Imperial Ministry of Justice***

There are three sides to the Ministry of Justice. Firstly, it maintains the legal records of the Imperium, interprets High Law and advises

other services on legal matters. Laws are made such by Imperial decree but it is the IMOJ that drafts them and advises on their implications. Secondly, the Ministry of Justice acts as an Imperium-wide enforcement agency, dealing with major and high-level issues. Personnel operating at this level are termed 'Agents'. The third facet is street-level enforcement carried out by marshals and their deputies.

The IMOJ exists mainly to enforce Imperial High Law, which means that it spends most of its time and effort on apprehending multi-world felons and investigating charges against governments and organisations. The latter involves close cooperation with the Bureaucracy and is often a drawn-out process of following financial paper trails culminating in low-profile arrests.

However, the IMOJ also provides law enforcement at a more direct level where this is appropriate. Starports and new colonies that have no established enforcement system can request (and pay for) a team from the IMOJ to be assigned. This will consist of an appropriate number of marshals and deputies to keep order, and may also include forensic scientists, detectives and administrative personnel if the deployment is large enough to require them.

IMOJ personnel are always tasked with upholding Imperial law and, where appropriate, local laws. The Ministry will not assign teams to a world whose laws are considered 'inappropriate' even if they do not violate the Imperial Charter – the IMOJ needs to maintain its image and integrity, and its personnel are not required to enforce the extreme laws of some Imperial member worlds.

When IMOJ agents and marshals are operating on a given world, they normally have to follow local procedures and are bound by local laws as well as Imperial ones. World governments have jurisdiction in their own territory unless a formal IMOJ operation (for example, an investigation into government malpractice or breaches of High Law) is in process.

There are two fairly distinct career paths open to IMOJ personnel – the deputy/marshal route or the agent route. Both can lead to a high position as a judicial advisor though the balance is skewed towards agents rather than marshals.

Travellers are most likely to encounter IMOJ marshals and their deputies enforcing law in frontier outposts that have chosen to request them. Agents are only likely to be encountered if the travellers become involved in organised crime or become felons on several worlds.

### ***The Imperial Interstellar Scout Service***

The IISS is not considered to be a military force, though its ships and personnel are tasked with upholding the law and can be co-opted into military operations at need. Scout vessels usually act as messengers and reconnaissance assets, though sometimes they are capable of functioning as escorts.



Most of the time, however, the Scout Service has a more peaceful role. There are three main branches of the service, overseen by the bureaucracy (that is, the scout service's bureaucracy, not the Imperial administration). Within each branch there are various subdivisions, such as contact & liaison or security. However, personnel move between specialisms and even branches on a fairly frequent basis. It is not uncommon for a scout to become bored with communications duty and request a stint with the survey branch. If a suitable berth is available and the comms branch can spare the scout, a transfer will usually be forthcoming.

Scouts never actually leave the service. Instead they go on 'detached duty' and are subject to reactivation at need. In practice younger, more recently detached scouts are far more likely to be reactivated than elderly men and women or those with families. Detached duty can be requested at any time and is often approved – the Scout Service would rather have a younger scout leave the service for a time and possibly return than trust a burned-out and resentful individual with a critical task.

Detached scouts do not receive a salary or support, though they can usually get a bunk and a meal in any scout service installation they visit. Occasionally a detached scout may be assigned a small starship, though this often comes with strings attached. The usual requirement is to file a short 'user report' on every starport the ship visits for inclusion in the Scout Service files. Many detached scouts return voluntarily to the service after a period doing something else.

The detached duty office also acts as a two-way clearing house for personnel. It helps other agencies (Imperial and private) that want to hire or 'borrow' scout personnel for a particular task find someone suitable.

Conversely, the detached duty office also maintains records of and pays salaries to non-scout personnel who are involved with the service and its activities. This can include contractors carrying out mundane work for the service but more commonly deals with the scientists, engineers and consultants that the Scout Service sometimes hires to round out a mission. These personnel are not considered to be scouts and are not subject to reactivation, though they remain on the detached duty office's books and may be called upon again in preference to a complete outsider.

The three main branches to which most scouts belong are the communications, exploration and survey offices. Comm-branch maintains communications across Imperial space. It is primarily concerned with the express boat (Xboat) network and the tenders, communications stations and bases that support it. Communications branch scouts also crew special courier ships and packet boats that deliver important items and regular updates to Imperial stations. As a rule naval couriers serve the navy and deliver emergency messages; scout vessels move routine traffic.

The survey branch undertakes the mammoth task of surveying and mapping every planet and asteroid in the Imperium, maintaining up-to-date charts as well as population census figures, records of starport types and quality, and all manner of other data-collection tasks within the Imperium and just beyond it. Survey branch is also responsible for monitoring many of the worlds that are under Imperial interdiction. Some 'red zones' are imposed and monitored by the navy (to punish a world for breaking High Law, for example) but those that are imposed for other reasons (including dangerous conditions or something of scientific interest) are normally monitored by scout service ships of the survey branch.

The exploration office is responsible for charting new territories, be they on a member world or far beyond the Imperium. As a rule the exploration office maps an area and the survey office then moves in and begins studying it. The same applies for newly-encountered species; exploration personnel will normally make first contact but it is the survey office that will study the new species. There are still plenty of areas within Imperial space that have not been charted in detail, so exploration teams can be encountered even in fairly settled areas.

The scout service is unusual in that none of its field branches has a rank system. Any given ship or mission has someone in charge, and experienced scouts are sometimes given the courtesy title of Senior Scout, but the overall system is that people are assigned a job according to their skills. A scout who led one mission may be assigned to another as an ordinary member of the team – though leadership skills and experience tend to result in a string of command positions.

The scout service administrative and planning arm is known as the Bureaucracy but is entirely different from the Imperial service of the same name. The Bureaucracy does have a rank and promotion structure, which is viewed with suspicion by many 'field' scouts. Most scouts serve their entire career in the field; some spend a token period in the field and apply for a Bureaucracy job at one of the regional scout bases or way stations. However, both the Bureaucracy and the field value self-reliance, initiative and competence very highly and plodding bean-counters tend to be weeded out by the promotion structure.

## **OTHER GROUPS**

A number of influential groups exist within the Imperium. These often have nobles associated with them and thus are part of the power structure, but some are outside the normal political apparatus.

### ***Shipping Lines***

The shipping lines that ply the spacelanes between Imperial worlds are vital to its economic and therefore political well-being. The larger lines are extremely influential, though most are restricted to a sector or two or a smaller area of operation and thus exert influence



over a relatively limited region. Most lines operate on established routes in a fairly limited area, though many are open to charters that might take them outside their own area if the price is right. Ships are generally of the same small number of classes

Most shipping lines operate on a sufficiently large scale that they can sponsor students through university or train them from the ground up, but all lines will gladly take ex-navy personnel or similarly experienced people. These are not just flight crew of course. Most lines have one or more bases where they conduct maintenance, and thus they need security, administrative and other personnel to support the actual flight operations.

Few shipping lines operate a vast miscellany of vessels; most have one or two designs in every niche they occupy, and most are limited to a segment of the marketplace. Some are purely bulk freighting concerns, others known for their luxury liners. There are specialist fast-courier or small-cargo shipping firms, general hauliers and even a few firms specialising in high-risk exploratory trade outside Imperial space.

To be a player in Imperial politics, a shipping line needs to have dozens of ships and operate on the sector level at the very least. However, there are plenty of smaller lines which have a handful of ships to their name and make a reasonable profit working a small region. So long as they remain below the threshold of interest of the bigger lines, or work in a way that complements their activities, these small lines can get by. If they tread on the toes of the shipping giants they tend to be edged out rather rapidly.

Below the level of these 'subsector' shipping lines there are various alliances of free traders and such like, which sometimes mature into shipping corporations but more commonly break up after a time. Alliances of this sort have little political power and get their personnel wherever they can. On-the-job training for the odd promising deck hand is possible but for the most part free traders hire people who can already do the job as they lack the resources to do otherwise.

Working for a shipping line (of whatever size) is an excellent way to prepare for a life as a traveller. As a general rule, personnel can gain promotion by moving down to a smaller line. A character working as assistant engineer aboard a shiny corporate liner can accelerate his promotion by taking a job as chief engineer aboard a smaller vessel operated by a minor company. This may be accompanied by a pay cut, however, and it is difficult to move in the opposite direction without taking a demotion.

There is also the risk that the character may 'move down' too much and end up working aboard a semi-legal vessel or broken-down free trader. However, some people prefer to be a senior crew member of a minor vessel to a life of luxury as a junior member of a more prestigious crew.

Shipping lines need to protect their personnel, assets and vessels. As a result ships can be armed, especially on the frontiers, and all carry at least a few weapons in a locker. Some shipping lines, however, take this a bit further and maintain a large security arm that is almost a private army and even have a number of small warships which are used to patrol dangerous systems or escort the line's commercial vessels. Warships do not make a profit, so this practice is only followed where the need is greatest.

### ***Insurgents and Terrorists***

While it is convenient to slap the label 'terrorist' on anyone whose actions are disapproved of, the Imperium recognises that there is a difference between insurgents and terrorists. By definition, a terrorist is someone who uses terror for political ends. The Imperium takes a harsh stance on such activity, but is much more flexible towards insurgents.

Insurgents are usually guerrilla fighters, but can sometimes be organised conventional forces fighting against the government of a world or the Imperium itself. This can create an awkward situation for the Imperial authorities. On the one hand, the world government is a member of the Imperium and entitled to support. On the other, the Imperium recognises the right of worlds to have whatever government their people choose and an insurgency may be an expression of the majority will.

There are also questions of morality and expediency. Should the Imperium support a morally dubious government, or help overthrow a liberal one in favour of a regime that fits well with Imperial plans for the region? For these and other reasons such as the sheer costs (in lives and money) involved the Imperium generally tries not to become involved in 'local matters' such as insurgencies against a world's government.

However, if the insurgents are anti-Imperium in outlook, plan to secede, or if they are damaging Imperial assets and causing needless suffering among the civilian population, then the Imperium may send in the army or the marines. The diplomatic corps may also become involved in trying to find a peaceful solution to the situation.

Thus while terrorist acts often result in Ministry of Justice involvement or a rapid military intervention if the scale justifies it, local insurgencies are generally left alone. It is not illegal for mercenary forces to fight on the side of insurgents, for example, and the guerrillas themselves are normally treated as prisoners of war. Terrorists are criminals and are dealt with accordingly.

### ***Criminals and Pirates***

It is inevitable in any society that there will be individuals who are dissatisfied enough to take up arms in the name of their cause, and others who prefer to ignore the law when it suits them. Most crime is of a local and relatively minor nature and is a matter for local governments to deal with.



The Imperium does not generally waste resources chasing minor criminals who have left one world and gone to another unless they rack up a very impressive list of offences. Even murderers, although by definition Imperial felons as well as local ones, are rarely actively pursued. They are, however, often caught by passive enforcement methods.

The Ministry of Justice circulates descriptions of wanted criminals to starports and world governments, and often picks up felons in the course of routine enforcement, such as identity checks when passing through customs at a port. However, only the most serious criminals are worth forming an Imperial task force to pursue across the sector.

Many worlds have extradition treaties with their neighbours, and many a criminal has thought himself safe only to be arrested for something not even illegal on the new world, and sent back to face trial.

The Imperial authorities tend to become involved when an individual commits many crimes on various worlds and is clearly a serious threat, or when a crime assumes political or economic significance. Organised crime falls into this category, though normally if a group's activities are restricted to one world then they are left for the local police to deal with.

Organised crime on a multiworld scale is a threat to the stability of the Imperium; indeed, many organised crime groups have political connections and can influence policy. This is unacceptable to the Imperium and is a major area of interest for the Ministry of Justice.

Piracy is another threat to the economic well-being of the Imperium. Piracy takes various forms from planetary raiding, where small communities are attacked by spacegoing raiders with actions ranging from hijacking to traditional heave-to-and-be-boarded piracy.

Most pirate attacks are one-offs carried out on an opportunistic basis, sometimes by mercenary units or armed merchant ships down on their luck and needing a quick source of cash. Some attacks are relatively genteel and take the form of extortion more than true piracy, but others are vicious indeed.

There are very few 'career' pirates in the Imperium. It is possible to make a few raids and then move on, but brazen buccaneering is not far short of suicide. The occasional pirate attack may not draw a reaction from the navy or Ministry of Justice, but repeated attacks in an area, or involving the same vessel, will draw a lethal response.

As a rule the navy maintains patrols to deter piracy and gathers intelligence on their activities, while the Ministry of Justice looks for tell-tale signs of where the cargoes or stolen ships are being sold. If a base can be identified, it will be smashed in a sudden overpowering raid by naval, marine and IMOJ assets.

Smuggling is not regarded as seriously as piracy in the Imperium, though there are still stiff penalties. On the other hand, commerce raiding is legal within certain limits. If it is part of a properly declared war and conducted in an humane manner then it is permissible to attack merchant traffic for the purpose of damaging an enemy economy. Raider captains have to be careful not to cross the line into piracy, however.

Pirate and smuggling rings, at least the successful ones, are usually involved with organised crime of other sorts, and thus can take on political significance.

### ***Religious Groups***

The Imperium has no official religion. It is tolerant and respectful of all religions and belief systems, other than those that contravene the basic sentient's rights that the Imperium grants to all self-aware people. In short, Imperial citizens are free to believe what they like, or nothing, so long as it does not harm anyone else.

There are a great many religions within Charted Space. Some are restricted to one species (and some are distinctly racist) while others appeal to all manner of beings. Religions have no special status; they are treated the same as business concerns and political groups. They must pay tax and follow the same laws as any other group. To the Imperium a religious gathering is much the same thing as a fishing club, and an evangelical preacher is the same as a salesman on the starport concourse offering cut-price personal comm upgrades. Religion is there if people want it (like fishing clubs and comm upgrades) and if they do not then there are limits on how pushy its proponents are allowed to be.

Religions are permitted Imperial representation by nobles like any other group, and world governments are allowed to sponsor religions. Indeed, some worlds are theocracies where the religious leaders are the government. Such governments are technically not allowed to force mandatory worship on their population, but this is often overlooked on the occasions when it does happen.

Some religions are more militant than others, and schisms within religions have led to a number of insurgencies and outright wars in the past. Where possible the Imperium stays out of such matters as they can become very tangled indeed.

# THE SPINWARD MARCHES

## OVERVIEW OF THE SPINWARD MARCHES

To the average citizen of the Imperial core worlds, the Spinward Marches is just a name. One of the distant provinces perhaps, or one of those troublesome backward border regions. Nothing good seems to ever come out of the Marches. The Civil War was launched from there; major conflicts with foreign states seem to be two-a-penny... and in any case the Marches are around the end of the Great Rift, very far away, and of no real consequence.

There is an element of truth in this, of course. The Marches are isolated not only by distance but by the barrier of the Great Rift, which cannot be crossed without considerable effort. As a result, the only way into and out of the Marches is through the narrow Imperial-held strip between the Great Rift and the Vargr extents, aptly named Corridor sector.

On top of that, Spinward Marches sector is the Imperial border with the Zhodani Consulate and several smaller human, Vargr and other states. As a result it was bound to have an interesting history. Mostly events in the Marches affect only the local area, but occasionally something does spill out. Usually it is something bad – that is just the way the universe works.

To a great extent, astrography dictates many of the characteristics of the sector. The single most important feature is the Spinward Main, which wends its way right across the sector, branching at several points. The Spinward Main is often considered to begin at Mora, though in fact the chain of stars runs onward into Star Lane subsector in Deneb sector for a couple of parsecs.

From Mora, an arm of the Main runs Coreward into Rhylanor subsector, but the Main proper is far longer. One of the major arms run Coreward into Aramis and Regina subsectors, then across to Spinward all the way to Querion subsector. The central arm runs through the Sword Worlds to Darrian subsector, while the Rimward arm splits into three major branches. One leads to Glisten and two run into Five Sisters.

The most important implication of this huge astrographical feature is that it is possible to reach any subsector of the Marches with a Jump-1 ship, albeit slowly. A Jump-2 ship can reach almost any world in the sector by following the Main then Jumping across onto a smaller local main. Only a handful of worlds cannot be reached in this way.

There are a few areas of very sparse systems in the Marches, and these tend to channel and restrict shipping. One is in Aramis

subsector but lies close to the border so has little effect on internal shipping. Rather more important is the sparse area in the Vilis and Lanth subsectors.

Not only is this a region of low stellar density, which restricts easy navigation, but the area is associated with a number of curious phenomena. While most can be dismissed as wild tales, the incidence of Misjumps and ship disappearances in the region around what is known as the Abyss Rift is significantly higher than in other areas. The region of sparse systems extends out to Spinward from Vilis but as there is no Imperial territory in this direction this is of little consequence.

The other region of low stellar density lies to Spinward-Coreward of Collace in District 268 and is known as the Collace Rift. Arms of the Spinward Main run around the edges of this rift, which contains the barely-surveyed world designated 875-496 and the interdicted Droyne worlds of Andor and Candory.

Politically, there are few barriers to navigation in most of the sector. The Sword Worlds Confederation is not friendly to the Imperium and this necessitates a detour around Sword Worlder space for most







ships headed into the Darrian Confederation. Difficulty of access also means that the Imperial holdings in Five Sisters subsector are more or less cut off from the rest of the Imperium.

Obviously, crossing the border into the Zhodani Consulate presents significant problems as Imperial ships are not always welcomed there. The same comments apply to the Sword Worlds Confederation. Ships coming into the Imperium from these states are sometimes considered somewhat suspect by the Navy and the worlds they visit.

The Imperial border is not a hard barrier. It is a simple enough matter to leave Imperial space, visit worlds outside the Imperium and later return. No special permission is needed. However, while the Imperium has laws that govern trade between member worlds these do not apply to systems outside the Imperium, and those systems have their own regulations. Thus although crossing the border is not a big deal, the way ships are treated by the local authorities when they make planetfall can be a disincentive to cross-border trading in some areas.

Above all, it is important to note that each world, whether part of the Imperium or not, is different and self-governing. The Imperium is a framework that establishes some common concepts and laws, and otherwise leaves worlds to their own devices. There are large cultural differences between many of the worlds of the Imperium. Beyond its borders this is even more pronounced, though only the most isolated worlds are not affected in some way by the values and ideas that exist elsewhere in the universe.

## ***HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE***

To understand why the sector is the way it is, it is necessary to look back over its long and somewhat troubled history.

It seems likely that the Ancients were active in the Spinward Marches region. There is certainly evidence of that, in the form of transplanted Terran species. Various animals and plants native to Terra and other distant worlds were found in the region when human exploration began. There were also humans living in the area; the Daryen people for one, and the rather more powerful Zhodani not far away.

Plus, there are a couple of interesting anomalies. Several Ancients sites and many more artefacts have been located, and the Ancients are thought to have been somehow responsible for the fact that Shionthy is now an asteroid belt; there is strong evidence that it was a planet until, in cosmological terms, quite recently.

However, little is known about ancient times in the Marches. Archaeologists turn up some new data from time to time but the work is both intermittent and piecemeal. Evidence has been found of non-human civilizations dating from the distant past but which are not thought to be associated with the Ancients. Perhaps time and research will make all this clearer.

In the meantime, it is known that the Ancients were here at some point and that they did a number of things that suggest a fairly lengthy stay. They are gone now. Beyond that, everything is a matter for conjecture.

Information about the Zhodani is hard to come by and not always reliable, but it seems likely that they arrived on their homeworld (Zhdant) about 300,000 years ago. They were brought from elsewhere (perhaps Terra) by the Ancients, who settled them and undertook a range of incomprehensible acts including remodelling mountains and cutting then refilling ocean trenches. They also reportedly built a city on the moon of Zhdant.

Soon afterwards, possibly as little as a few hundred years, Zhdant came under severe orbital bombardment. It is thought that the Ancient cities and other sites were destroyed using several hundred megatons of nuclear explosives as well as deadfall ordnance (objects dropped from orbit as kinetic weapons) and weapons that have not been identified. Modern Zhodani are descended from a few tens of thousands of survivors, who were cast back to barbarism. There are no records of survivors among the Ancients, at least not among the data that the Imperium has been able to gather from the Zhodani Consulate.

### ***The Zhodani Consulate***

Over the next tens of thousands of years the Zhodani struggled to survive an ice age triggered by the bombardment and, as conditions improved, began to spread out across the planet. By approximately -24,000 (using the modern Imperial calendar), the Zhodani had evolved into their modern form and were increasingly reliant on agriculture rather than nomadic hunting.

Imperial scientists believe that there was once a large population of Chirpers on Zhdant. They might have been put there by the Ancients or could perhaps have been native. In either case, human contact with the Chirpers, who had built their own society, resulted in the discovery that these Chirpers had psionic abilities. Zhodani humans may or may not have gained their initial insight into psionics from the Chirper population; what is known is that from about the time the humans and Chirpers encountered one another, Zhodani humans began to display psionic abilities.

Zhodani sources are vague about the Chirpers; apparently they all died out at some time within recorded history. There is also evidence that some time around -8000, the Zhodani suffered some kind of disaster, probably depopulation due to a plague. There may be a connection between these events.

Civilization was rebuilt slowly, and not without difficulty. However, by -6,731 a technological society existed on Zhdant. This was the date of the first Psionic Games, the beginning of modern Zhodani society. The Games established a path for a psionically talented commoner to join the nobility and helped find the most powerful psionic individuals in each generation. The period between games



(three local years) is still a fundamental concept in Zhodani society. For example, it is the term served by most elected officials.

The Zhodani are thought to have begun (though some sources say 'regained', which has interesting implications) space travel around -6400. Within 400 years they were launching sublight exploration missions to neighbouring systems. The Zhodani were apparently willing to undertake very long-term operations; they created colonies in several systems and sent out exploration ships on missions lasting decades. The Zhodani Consulate was founded in -5,823 and consisted of worlds as far as four parsecs from Zhdant.

In -5415 the Zhodani developed Jump drive and rapidly expanded their territory, encountering sentient species along the way. They seem to have met the Vargr around -2,800 and the Vilani in about -2,000. However, Zhodani exploration was unusual in one very significant way; they seem to have been fascinated by the Galactic Core.

Since the first, in -4,000, the Zhodani have launched seven major and many more minor Core Expeditions. These have gradually pushed towards the galactic core, establishing a chain of refuelling and repair bases and setting up relations with the species met along the way.

The expeditions seem to be limited to a region about 30 parsecs wide (with occasional offshoots) and over 8,000 parsecs long. Imperial scientists do not know the purpose of these missions, but suggest that given the time and expense involved they must be considered very important.

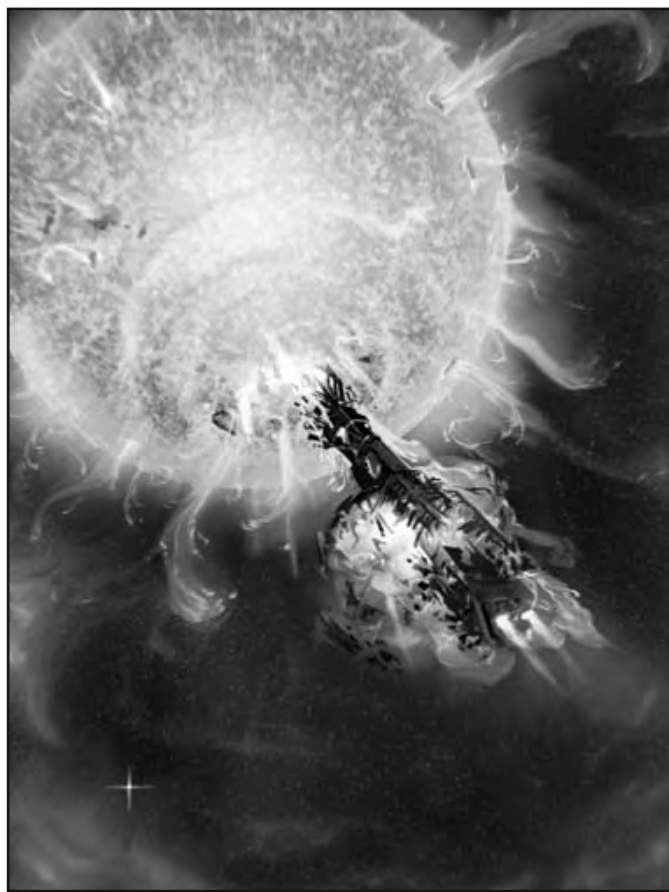
The Zhodani Consulate expanded fairly rapidly from about -4,000 to -1,000, at which point it halted. Unlike the Imperium, there is no 'border creep'; the Consulate has been stable for two thousand years. According to Zhodani sources, it has reached the largest size that can be effectively governed and further expansion is both unnecessary and counterproductive in the long term.

Although it holds a few worlds in the Spinward Marches, the Zhodani Consulate did not push into the sector and thus had a stable border when later arrivals appeared on the scene.

### ***The Rise and Fall of the Darrians***

Meanwhile, another transplanted group of humans was becoming active in the region. Like the Zhodani, the Darrians were settled on a habitable world by the Ancients for reasons unknown and were then abandoned there when the Ancients 'departed'. Darrian was a very habitable world and there was thus less impetus to develop technology than elsewhere. The Darrians developed slowly and peacefully.

Many centuries later, in -1520, while the Rule of Man was declining into the Long Night, a fleet of ships belonging to a Terran corporation arrived at Darrian seeking a new home. They befriended the



Darrians rather than competing with them and by -1400 a synthesis of the two cultures had emerged. This had the best features of both groups; the energy and inquisitiveness of the Terrans fused with the intellectual nature of the Darrians to create a technologically advanced yet ethical society.

Both groups were capable of interbreeding and within 400 years there was only one Darrian race and culture. Moreover, it possessed technology rated at TL16 on the Imperial scale – better than the Imperium itself has managed to create to date. However, this was the Darrians' undoing. They began to experiment on Tanis, Darrian's sun, in -1000 and in -924 the star destabilised.

It is thought that the event known as Mahgiz, (Chaos, in the Darrian language) was caused by a probe sent into the star to conduct an experiment of some sort. Whatever the cause, a series of massive solar flares erupted. These were accompanied by a huge electromagnetic pulse (EMP) which radiated out from the star at lightspeed.

The pulse did no physical damage but destroyed electronics. At a stroke factories, hospitals, businesses and starships lost their electronics systems. Vehicles crashed, automated systems went out of control and communications went down. The pulse was followed by a wavefront of stellar gas moving more slowly. Three weeks after the EMP, Darrian was devastated by fire from space, which killed



over 80% of the population and effectively destroyed civilization on the planet.

Although the gas dissipated in the Darrian system, the EMP struck other systems as it radiated out. With some warning, it was possible to preserve electronic systems from the worst effects. However, the heart had been torn out of the Darrian civilization. Without the technology and industry of the homeworld there was no way to replace or sustain technological items such as starships possessed by the Darrian colonies.

In -905, the Darrians began taking measures to ensure their long-term survival. Starships were placed in storage and each colony looked inward, preparing to survive the difficult times ahead. By -860 the Darrians had ceased all space travel.

Over the next six centuries the world of Mire gradually climbed back up to TL10 and began constructing starships. Its cache of surviving vessels were broken out and refurbished, and the Darrians returned to the stars. In -275 they reached out to begin exploring nearby space. What they found was both surprising and ominous.

### ***Newcomers in the Marches***

Settlers set out from Terra and other worlds throughout the Interstellar Wars and the Rule of Man. Some used cryogenic suspension, some attempted to use generation ships. Most had Jump-capable vessels. The fate of many groups will never be known. Indeed, there are almost certainly still a number of sublight vessels filled with now-dead frozen colonists headed out into the unknown.

However, the fate of some missions was less grim. One such reached the world now named Gram in Sword Worlds Subsector and in -399 founded a colony there. This group was composed mainly North Europeans from Terra, and possibly due to difficult times early on, developed a rather unique culture based on an idealised version of Icelandic/Scandinavian values. As the colony grew, surrounding worlds were colonised and were named for swords in Terran mythology. A government of sorts, based on the world of Sacnoth and known as the Sacnoth Dominate, eventually emerged.

In -164 the Sword Worlders, as they were now known, encountered the re-emerging Darrians, much to mutual surprise. The two cultures were very different; the Darrians egalitarian and intellectual, the Sword Worlders chauvinistic, obsessed with personal honour and above all far too 'manly' for their own good. Cultural and occasionally military conflict flared up from time to time between the Darrians and the Sword Worlders, and has never really ceased.

However, the Sword Worlders spent most of their time bickering among themselves, and by -102 the Sacnoth Dominate had broken up in rebellion. The subsequent period of civil war caused all interstellar government among the Sword Worlds to collapse by -80. Each of the Sword Worlds went its own way, forming local

alliances or honouring old debts of honour for past assistance but never forming a single government. There were many attempts, some of them violent, but none that achieved any real success.

Meanwhile, not far to Rimward of the Marches, another group of worlds was being settled. A European long-range colony mission using sublight ships was launched in -2452, just 30 years before the invention of the Jump drive. The mission consisted of three ships, all aimed at worlds close to one another. C-Jammer reached New Home in -6. Van de Lubbe landed its colonists at what became Neubayern in -2 and Voyageur reached Amondiaige, in Year 0.

The colonists of course knew nothing of the Interstellar Wars or the First, Second or Third Imperium. The colony ships moved on, still using sublight travel, and settled nearby systems. Each then went its own way; New Home being the first to build new spacecraft in 270. Gradually the inhabitants of what became known as Old Islands subsector spread out to other worlds and into New Islands Subsector. However, as these two relatively dense clusters of stars lay in the middle of the Great Rift, they remained cut off from events elsewhere for many centuries.

Finally, in 983, an Imperial Interstellar Scout Service vessel (IISS Eldorado) Misjumped into the Islands and obtained local assistance in getting home. The secret of the Jump drive was thus obtained by the people of Serendip Belt, who used it to begin a war of conquest.

Some years later, in 1016, an IISS mission reached the Islands and discovered the results of the inadvertent intervention. In a misguided attempt to put things right, Jump drive technology was distributed among the other worlds of the subsectors. Since that time, a number of small conflicts have been fought and the various factions have embarked on a massive arms race that none of them can afford. The result is that today the Islands subsectors are divided into a number of armed camps, with over-militarised states itching to use their excessively inflated fleets on one another.

The history of the Islands subsectors is peripheral to that of the Marches, except for two factors. Firstly, they form part of a difficult but useable route across the Great Rift for high-Jump couriers and military vessels. This allows much more rapid contact between Imperial holdings in Verge and Gushmege sectors and the Marches than would be possible by going all the way around the Rift. Secondly, the presence nearby of several states that will avidly buy military technology or actual weapon systems has influenced the economic position in the Rimward end of the sector for the past century.

Another influence on the region, though a minor one, was exerted by the Aslan. The Aslan home region lies across the Great Rift and although they have possessed the Jump drive for two thousand years the Aslan have only recently arrived in the Marches. In fact the first recorded crossing of the Great Rift occurred in -1104, and gradually a number of colonies were set up on the Coreward side.



It is not known exactly when the Aslan entered the Marches. Quite probably, explorers were active in the region centuries before the first recorded contacts. It is known that Aslan were present on the world of Romar in District 268 by 454, and contact with the Zhodani was made in 461.

In 585, several groups of Aslan ihatei offered to fight for the Darrian Confederation in return for grants of land. Since that time the Darrian Confederation has had a fair sized Aslan population and has recruited many thousands of Aslan troops into its armed forces.

## ***THE IMPERIUM IN THE MARCHES***

The Third Imperium was founded in Year 0 and expanded quickly at first. After the end of the Pacification Campaigns, this changed. The Imperium as an entity was no longer particularly concerned with expansion. It was entirely willing to accept new members and for corporations and other bodies to launch expeditions beyond the borders, but the initial deliberate expansion had been replaced by a gradual 'border creep'.

Expansion to Coreward was curtailed by the Vargr Extents, a large area filled with small states and independent worlds with mostly Vargr populations. Major states were encountered in most other directions, or rifts created natural barriers. However, there was a narrow corridor between the Coreward end of the Great Rift and the Vargr extents, and through this bottleneck the Imperium gradually expanded into the region beyond. This area is often referred to as lying 'behind the claw' as the shape of the Great Rift resembles a lobster claw to most observers.

When they began exploring behind the claw, the early Imperial scouts found an under populated region which eventually led to the Sword Worlds and the Darrian Confederation. These two small but developed powers lay close together; islands in a sea of unclaimed worlds. Before meeting them, however, the Imperial scouts ran unto the Zhodani in Year 50. Initial contact was tentative and it was some time before the scale of the Zhodani Consulate was appreciated.

After establishing a forward base at Deneb, the scouts pushed on to open up the region, and behind them came the traders and the colonists. In the region around Deneb itself, to Trailing of the Marches, expansion was fairly rapid and many colonies received considerable investment. The result was the creation of several economically important worlds. Movement into the Marches was slower and was made in piecemeal fashion.

One of the biggest developments for the Marches was the establishment of a trading settlement at Mora. Set up by Ling Standard Products in Year 60, this was initially the far end of a long trade route through Corridor and Deneb sectors from the Imperial core. Over the years it gradually developed into a forward base for trade with the new colonies of the Marches and with the states encountered there.

Contact with the Sword Worlds was in 73, but it was not until 148 that the Darrians met the Imperials. During this time the Sword Worlds managed to create a new unified government, the Triple Dominion (shared by Anduril, Colada and Dyrnwyn) which lasted from 104 to 217. It may be that the Sword Worlders deliberately discouraged the Imperials from moving through their territory and thus meeting their Darrian rivals. Certainly the amount of scouting missions in that direction dropped fairly rapidly.

By 200, Imperial interest in new territory, especially in distant regions that were hard to reach, had waned. Expansion in the Marches thus proceeded in a disjointed manner, fuelled by economics and on a fairly small scale. The presence of the Spinward Main, a long chain of stars connected by a Jump-1 route, enabled easy access to large parts of the sector. The remainder was largely ignored and there was little interest in pushing out beyond, even to Spinward or Rimward where there were open borders. To Coreward the Zhodani Consulate blocked further expansion in that direction.

In 250, the Imperium had spread into those parts of the sector easily reachable via the Spinward Main, bypassing less accessible regions. Regina, settled as early as 75, became a major trade centre, acting as a hub for half a dozen neighbouring worlds. By 250 this number had grown to 17, though some were very minor colonies. Expansion slowed still further as the easily-reached worlds were taken. Colonies grew into independent world-states in their own right and the region developed a respectable economy. However, backwaters remained exactly that; few new colonies were founded in most parts of the sector.

By 500, tensions with the Zhodani Consulate were rising. Imperial expansion, though slow, had resulted in Imperial and Zhodani colonies being intermingled along the border. After a period of escalating tensions, war broke out in 589. The conflict took the form of skirmishing along the border and deep raids into the sector against the main Imperial worlds there. The Imperial fleet was caught at less than full readiness, and the Zhodani had formed the first Outworld Coalition with Vargr states in Gvurrdon sector.

Eventually the Imperials were able to force a stalemate and the subsequent armistice, enacted in 604, ended what is now known as the First Frontier War. The Imperium lost some territory but was compensated with ownership of large unclaimed areas of the sector. Had the Zhodani wanted these systems they had had centuries to take them unopposed, so this was an easy concession for them to make.

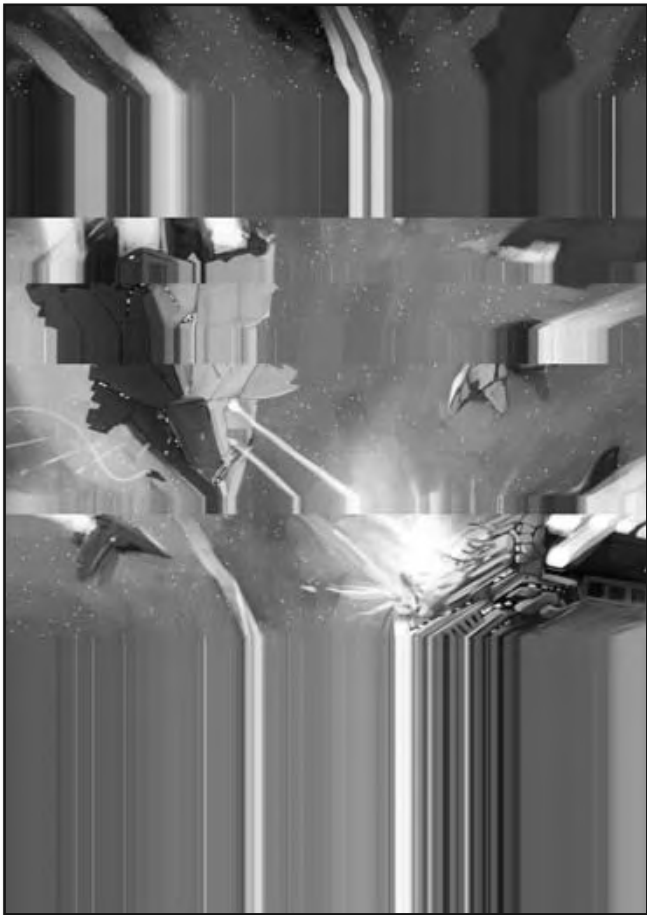
The Imperial commander in the Marches, Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell, was deeply disgusted at the lack of support he had received during the war. Desperately needed reinforcements were not released from other sector fleets despite Plankwell's entreaties. When they finally arrived, the reinforcements were enough to force a stalemate, after which Plankwell used them for another purpose.



With his fleet at his back, Plankwell advanced on Capital, assassinated Empress Jacqueline and took the Iridium Throne for himself. This began the Civil War, during which a series of emperors ruled for brief periods. These 'Emperors of the Flag' or 'Barracks Emperors' were almost all naval commanders who defeated the last claimant only to fall in battle themselves.

While the Civil War was raging, the Outworld Coalition reformed and struck again, in 615. The Second Frontier War, which lasted until 620, was characterised by a brilliant if rather desperate holding action orchestrated by Grand Admiral Arbellatera Alkhalikoi, coupled with raids by Imperial cruiser forces into enemy territory. Benefiting from a crash-building programme intended to replace the losses incurred in the Frontier and Civil wars, Arbellatera was able to fight the Outworld Coalition to a bloody standstill. She unilaterally negotiated an armistice that ceded more Imperial territory to the Zhodani and, as Plankwell before her, advanced on Capital.

The Second Frontier War ended in 620, and in 622 Grand Admiral Arbellatera reached Capital and defeated the fleet of Emperor Gustus. Rather than simply take the crown, she appointed herself Regent, holding the throne in trust until the Imperial Moot could settle the matter of succession. Arbellatera was crowned Emperor by the Moot in 622, ending the Civil War and beginning the modern dynasty.



These events stripped the Marches of its fleet, but there was no resumption of hostilities with the Zhodani for many years. Indeed, it was not until 979 that conflict broke out once again. There had been incidents and even a few skirmishes in the intervening time, and tensions had been rising for some years.

Despite this, the Imperial response was disjointed and, overall, inadequate. The war mainly took the form of commerce raiding by cruisers while the battle fleets of both sides faced off but did little. The Navy and the Emperor himself were censured for their lack of activity, and eventually, in 986, a peace agreement was reached. The terms were unfavourable to the Imperium and this, coupled with general disaffection over the way the war was prosecuted, resulted in the abdication of Emperor Styryx.

The settlement did eliminate some problematical border regions and allowed a good defensive frontier to be set up in accordance with the 'thin hard crust' strategy then in use. This strategic model called for a forward defensive zone to held as strongly as possible and was later replaced by a more flexible system of defence in depth.

Peace returned to the Marches, though elsewhere the Solomani Rim War distracted Imperial attention for some time. Then, in 1082, the Fourth Frontier War erupted. This conflict was triggered by an unintentional incident and took the form of a series of naval battles along the frontier. It was over quickly; peace was made in 1084, before the Emperor's orders for conduct of the war, or any significant reinforcements, reached the Marches. Again there was some slight realignment of borders.

Since the end of the 'False War' as it is sometimes known, the region has been at relative peace. There are troubles on various worlds, the occasional Imperial intervention or trade war between corporations and so forth but there are no indications that major troubles are brewing.

### ***The Marches Today***

The Spinward Marches of today, in the year 1105 since the founding of the Third Imperium, are the product of great and small events. The distant and more recent past continuing to influence the present with many initiatives and movements afoot. Some are overt, some are hidden and some a combination of both. The consequences of some of these actions cannot be predicted even by their instigators. Whatever else may or may not be true, the Marches of 1105 are an interesting place.

## ***STATES AND PEOPLES OF THE MARCHES***

The majority of worlds and people in the Marches are part of the Imperium and are dealt with below. Note however that the Imperium is not a monolithic organisation; it has many power blocs and interest groups, and some of these are aligned with external



factions. Others are pursuing their own ends which may not coincide with the best interests of the Imperium as a whole.

### ***The Aslan***

There are no Aslan worlds in the Marches, but there are Aslan populations on several worlds. Some of these are integrated into the local population (such as in the Darrian Confederation) while others remain aloof in their own settlements. Some are present legally and with the blessings of the world government; some are squatters who have simply grabbed some land and set up a home.

This is a common practice among Aslan *ihatei*, or 'second sons'. Aslan males value land ownership very highly, but only the primary heir inherits. Some Aslan males are happy to serve their clan in a subordinate role. The *ihatei* are the others; those who have set out to make their own fortune.

*Ihatei* settlements sometimes trade in either goods or services – several worlds have small units of Aslan mercenaries as part of their planetary armed forces. Others are simply armed camps whose inhabitants just want to be left alone and are prepared to repel any attempt to interfere with their plans.

Aslan society is very male-dominated, with females taking supporting roles as managers, technicians and scientists while the males are pilots, soldiers and leaders. This could make them rather difficult to deal with, but in many ways Aslan can be simpler to get along with than Sword Worlders.

Aslan have strict culture of duty and honour, and can be insulted very easily by those that do not understand their ways. Some Aslan are more understanding about the cultural ignorance of outsiders than others. However, the basics of Aslan etiquette (at least enough not to get into serious trouble) can be fairly quickly picked up, which enables most people to interact with Aslan without being challenged to a duel or finding themselves outside the Aslan territory with a warning never to come back.

Aslan trade ships and mercenary units are fairly common in the Marches, with *ihatei* settlements being restricted mainly to the Spinward–Rimward corner of the sector. Individuals and small groups have settled on many worlds and are unlikely to attract comment on most Imperial worlds.

### ***The Darrian Confederation***

The Darrian Confederation is an ally of the Imperium, and welcomes Imperial ships subject to the usual customs checks and traffic controls. The Darrian alliance dates from 595 and was a response to a Sword Worlder invasion of the Entropic Worlds, then a territory of the Darrian Confederation, during the First Frontier War in 593.

The Darrians control a fairly small area of space, containing 17 worlds. This number has changed from time to time, largely due to

Sword Worlder invasions, but otherwise the Confederation is very stable. However, some Imperial citizens view the Darrians with a certain amount of suspicion.

The reason for this is the Darrians' possession of the Star Trigger, a doomsday weapon based on the probe that caused their own near-extinction in the Maghiz (Chaos). A version of the Star Trigger was reportedly deployed around 400 and is carried aboard vessels of the Special Arm, a Darrian force dedicated to protecting the Star Trigger and using it if the need arises.

The Special Arm has at least one secret base; it is not known how many ships they have, nor how many Star Triggers are operational. As far as is known, the weapon has not been tested in the field. A successful test would be fairly noticeable, so the assumption is that one has not been made. The Darrians, however, maintain that they had a working Star Trigger available if they need it.

Being a fairly small state, the Darrian Confederation maintains a modest but capable navy crewed by Darrian and Aslan personnel. A handful of TL 16 vessels exist. These are relics left over from the pre-Maghiz period and cannot be replaced or even properly maintained, so they are used very sparingly.

Darrian ships regularly conduct exchange training with Imperial vessels, and joint operations are not unknown. For the most part, the Confederation patrols and polices its own space and the Imperium does likewise. Trade ships, on the other hand, come and go as they please. However, the need to go through the unwelcoming Sword Worlds or around through neutral space does limit the volume of trade somewhat.

The Darrians are not at war with the Sword Worlders but a state of mutual mistrust and dislike exists, seasoned with ongoing resentment over the Entropic Worlds and other issues, but for various reasons neither side wants an open war.

The Confederation is not expansionistic. There are many unclaimed worlds nearby, but the Darrians have never showed much interest in acquiring new territories. Its people are much more interested in scientific research and finding ways to improve their peaceful lives.

Darrian itself receives fair numbers of tourists who want to see the high-tech wonders left behind by the Maghiz. However, the capital of the Confederation is at Mire, which was the first world to regain spaceflight and is today the centre of both government and the economy.

### ***The Droyne***

Droyne can be encountered all over the Marches, though not commonly. There are a few communities on various worlds, mostly in isolated areas, and several ships that move around according to whatever agenda they may have.



There are two Droyne-owned worlds in the Marches; Candory and Andor. Both lie close together in Five Sisters subsector where only Jump-3 ships can reach them. Both are interdicted by strong Imperial Navy squadrons for reasons that are classified. Most people believe that the interdiction has to do with the Droyne use of psionics, which is of course disapproved-of by the Imperium. The authorities decline to comment when asked.

Droyne ships come and go from these two worlds and are sometimes sighted in ports across the Marches and beyond. There is also some civilian access, mainly to trade ships with special permits in place. However the Droyne themselves, like those living in small enclaves on various worlds in the Marches, do not seem to be very interested in outside contact.

It is entirely possible to visit the same Droyne Oyttrip (community) on several occasions and receive a different reception each time. The Droyne do not explain themselves to outsiders. They are something of a mystery even to the experts that study them. To the average Traveller they are totally incomprehensible.

### ***The Federation of Arden***

The Federation of Arden does not, technically, exist. Arden is one of several independent worlds lying between the Imperial/Zhodani borders that have been influenced by both powers over the centuries. In recent years Arden has begun proposing a 'local defence association' among nearby worlds with a view to creating a formal alliance neutral to both Zhodani and Imperial interests.

Although this idea has not met with great enthusiasm, a number of political pressure groups, businesses and very minor shipping lines have recently begun making a lot of noise about a 'Federation of Arden'. Exactly what is meant by this term depends on who is using it. It seems to commonly be used to describe a loose alliance of businesses and other groups attached to the political coat-tails of Arden.

There are those who predict that some kind of trade or even military alliance may emerge in time. This would require other world governments to sign up, which does not seem imminently likely. It is probable that the whole thing is just talk, but the term 'Federation of Arden' has now passed into common use in the surrounding region. Time will tell what form the Federation eventually takes.

### ***The Sword Worlds***

One of the big questions in the Marches is: which is correct: The Sword Worlds IS, or The Sword Worlds ARE? The Sword Worlders themselves seem unable to decide, which implies that the latter is true.

The Sword Worlds Confederation is a very loose alliance whose members spend most of their time arguing among themselves or jostling for position. Individual world governments tend to pursue their own agendas even where there is supposedly a cooperative

effort being made. Joint ventures are usually short-lived, though a charismatic individual can often hold things together where a paper agreement would simply fall apart.

As a result, unless there is a severe external threat or a major opportunity on offer, Sword Worlder activity tends to be disjointed. When the Confederation as a whole acts, it can do so with a surprising degree of unity, at least in the short term. Naval and military assets, which normally belong to the individual worlds, are pooled under central command. Once a chain of command is established (which can be a difficult process) the combined fleet can be expected to follow its orders whatever local agendas may be in place.

One reason for this is that although the Sword Worlds Confederation resembles a dysfunctional family with feuds and jealousies getting in the way of almost every activity, it is still a family. Almost any rivalry or dispute can be set aside while a threat to the Confederation is dealt with.

However, in peacetime, this means that vessels ostensibly belonging to the Sword Worlds Confederation Navy must be thought of as serving their home world first and foremost. To an outsider a patrol vessel out of Gram might look just like one out of Narsil, but their captains may have very different priorities.

Imperials find the Sword Worlders difficult to deal with (and vice versa) due to cultural differences. Sword Worlders are chauvinistic (some would say extremely protective instead) towards women and find it hard to accept Imperial females in positions of responsibility or power. They tend to come over as haughty and arrogant, and look down on those who do not meet their standards.

The Sword Worlds Confederation as a whole is politically unfriendly to the Imperium and the Darrian Confederation. Note that 'unfriendly' does not mean actively hostile nor stupid. The Sword Worlders do not want a war with the Imperium, in which their vessels would be over matched in terms of numbers and technology, and do not deliberately provoke the Imperials. They will not, however, allow themselves to be pushed around.

Thus passing through Sword Worlder space tends to be unpleasant and somewhat difficult rather than dangerous for most minor ship operators such as free traders, and expensive for the bigger lines. Those that have won the respect of the Sword Worlders, on the other hand, are treated as old friends-in-all-but-blood.

It is not possible to describe an over-arching Sword Worlds Confederation plan for the future, other than to say that the Sword Worlds want to be left alone to captain their own fate. Exactly what each world is planning at any given time varies greatly.

The Sword Worlds owns the four so-called 'Metal Worlds' (Iron, Bronze, Mithril and Steel), but has not done much with them.

They are designated as reserve worlds in much the same way that the Imperium earmarks some uninhabited worlds for future development when the means are available or the need arises. As yet, there has been little such activity and an expression of interest by the Imperial Colonial Office in developing one or more of the metal worlds has not been rebuffed by the Sword Worlders.

### ***The Vargr***

Vargr are the second most common species in the Imperium, especially at the Coreward end of Imperial space. Most worlds in the Marches have a mixed human/Vargr population, though humans are prevalent. On a few worlds the minority Vargr are second-class citizens or live in separate communities, but for the most part humans and Vargr live in the same streets and apartment blocks, work alongside one another, and are entirely familiar with one another.

Imperial Vargr are just that; Imperial citizens like anyone else, and tend to be seen as a-person-from-Regina, for example, rather than an alien. Vargr are not alien in the Marches, not in the sense of being strange and unknown. They tend to display Imperial cultural influences or follow the culture of their homeworld, just like anyone else.

Non-Imperial Vargr, from the Extents, come from a slightly different culture. Actually, one of many different cultures that exist in that region. They tend to have slightly different habits and values to Imperial Vargr depending on their origins. There are no large Vargr states in the Marches and no monolithic power structure in the Extents. Local politics are vigorous at times and governments can change on a short time frame, making cross-border politics somewhat more interesting.

Vargr of all origins show their pack-animal roots in a tendency to gravitate to individuals or ideas with 'Charisma'. Charisma is hard to define exactly; each individual Vargr has his own idea of what constitutes a worthy cause or leader. Status and recognition tend to be more important to Vargr than an equivalent human, especially if the recognition comes from someone the Vargr admires or respects.

Contrary to certain stereotypes, Vargr are not flighty in their allegiances. They may transfer their loyalty from one leader to another if he has sufficient Charisma but this is not done lightly. It is usually considered a natural consequence of meeting a more charismatic leader rather than a betrayal if a Vargr leaves his old allegiance. However, this does not mean that a Vargr naval officer will switch sides at the drop of a hat. Charisma is a factor but there are many others to be considered; demonstrating loyalty to a leader is a charismatic act in its own right.

Vargr tradeboats from the Extents can be encountered all over the Marches, especially in the Coreward-Trailing corner of the sector. Unfortunately, so can corsairs. Raiding is considered to be a more

honourable profession by Vargr than most humans, and some states of the Extents actively encourage it. Most Imperial Vargr are less accepting of raiding and piracy than those from the Extents.

### ***The Zhodani Consulate***

The Zhodani Consulate is the largest non-Imperial power with an interest in the Marches. Its holdings are small, confined to a couple of subsectors along the Spinward-Coreward edge of the sector. However, the influence of the Consulate reaches much further into the sector than this.

Zhodani military ships are unlikely to be encountered in Imperial territory except as escorts for consulate officials or valuable cargoes. They are occasionally active in neutral areas and routinely transit a narrow corridor through Imperial space to the Sword Worlds for 'diplomatic purposes'. Access is permitted by treaty for a small tonnage of vessels each year. Imperial Navy ships shadow the Zhodani vessels during their transit.

Zhodani merchants and couriers are seen somewhat more often, and range more widely, but as a rule they tend to stay out of Imperial space. There is a persistent theory that the first three Frontier Wars (the fourth was an accident) were fought because the Zhodani felt threatened by something the Imperium was doing, and that if there is no perceived threat then there will be no more war or even much interaction. The Zhodani do not seem very interested in what happens outside their own extensive borders.

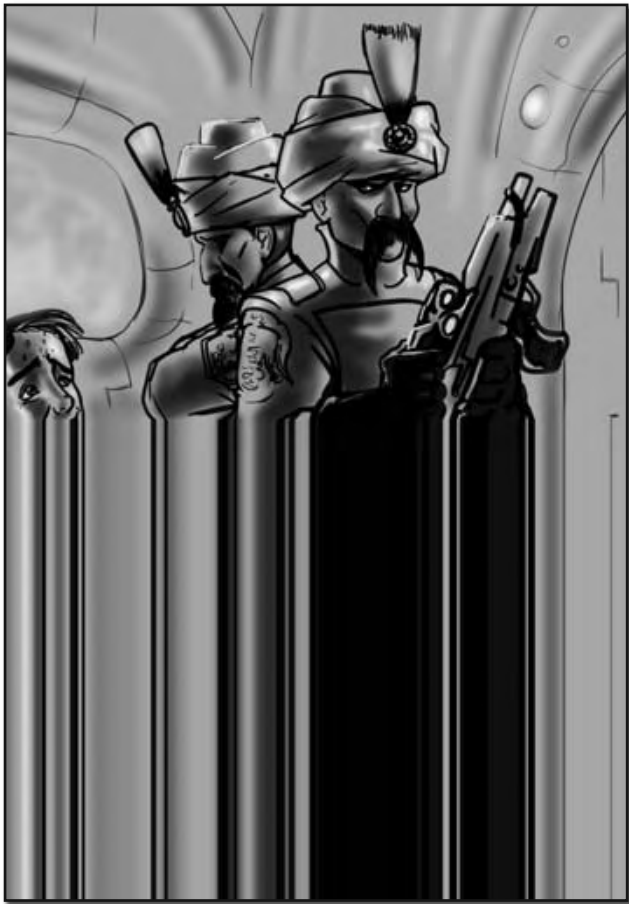
There are those, of course, who take the opposite view. They contrast the lack of Zhodani ships in Imperial space with the way imperial vessels routinely trade into the Vargr Extents and neutral space beyond the borders, and into the Consulate itself, and suggest that it is the ships they do not see that are the problem. There are also claims that the Consulate is sponsoring anti-Imperial sentiment and even activity within the Marches.

The Consulate is not inclined to comment on these things. It maintains a strong naval and military presence along the border and is not very receptive to Imperial vessels crossing into the Consulate. Permits are required and boardings are not uncommon. While vessels are not harassed, they are not welcomed either.

Exactly how negative an image this creates seems to depend greatly on the outlook of the ship crew in question. Those that dislike the Zhodani speak of this lack of welcome as a deliberate attempt to discourage Imperials from entering the Consulate. Those with a more neutral viewpoint feel that the Zhodani simply do not care one way or the other and that Imperial ships with the right paperwork in place are as welcome as in most other regions.

It would be very surprising if the Zhodani Consulate did not have some kind of intelligence gathering apparatus in place within Imperial space. The availability of psionic powers grants a few extra capabilities but most likely the Consulate uses a fairly mundane





system of agents, informants and couriers like all other states. Its own counter-intelligence system seems to be very effective at times, but only sporadically.

The rest of the time Imperial agents in Zhodani space seem to be able to operate undiscovered. Asking why this might be leads to the conclusion that perhaps the Zhodani are content to leave most agents in place and only removes those that are troublesome or when something important is about to happen. This sudden ability to become highly competent disturbs Imperial intelligence people, who strongly suspect that the Zhodani are deliberately leaving their agents in place for reasons of their own.

The Zhodani Consulate has a maximum tech level of 14 available, and enormous industrial power. The size of its fleets are unknown, but based on previous conflicts they are likely to be huge. Certainly large numbers of patrol craft have been sighted along the border, and these seem to be very efficient.

### **Minor Races**

Members of the various minor races can be encountered all across the Marches, serving aboard starships, working in the port or settled into a nice job on a planet far from their homeworld. Although the vast majority of citizens are humans or Vargr there is nothing unusual in seeing the odd alien (or group of aliens) going about their business.

Some minor races have their homes in the Marches, and most do not have starship technology so tend to be encountered only rarely away from home. Minor races are full members of the Imperium if they are members at all. There is no discrimination based on species. However, the homeworlds of most minor races are relatively undeveloped compared to the more important Imperial worlds in the region, so their economic importance is small. Minor race homeworlds are represented to the Imperium by nobles like any other, unless they are interdicted for their own protection or the safety of others.

### **A Note On Languages**

Within the Imperium and in most areas beyond it, the standard language is Galanglic. Galanglic is a melding of English and several other languages, including Vilani, which has evolved over many centuries. Local dialects and variations are quite common, especially on backwater worlds. Someone who speaks Galanglic in any of its forms can usually make himself understood anywhere in the Marches, even though it may not be the first language on some worlds.

Within the Imperium, various groups have their own languages which include High Sylean, Vilani and the languages of various minor races. Worlds that were settled or came to be dominated by people originating among one of Earth's many non-English-speaking cultures may speak very unusual forms of Galanglic but more often have their own tongues based on the language of their forefathers. Of course, centuries of offworld influences and linguistic drift may have changed this language beyond all recognition.

Thus on some worlds, although Galanglic may be spoken as a second language, the locals may use some other tongue entirely for daily business. Further confusion can be created by the fact that what one group calls 'German' or 'Chinese' may have drifted so much that another group would identify these with an entirely different ethnicity.

In addition, other cultural groups will have their own, entirely separate, languages. Minor races have their own tongues and even modes of communication that are entirely different. The best example of the latter is the sign language of the Hivers, though Hivers are not likely to be encountered so far to Spinward.

The Darrians have their own language, which is a melding of their original Darrian tongue and Turkish, the language of the first Solomani to join them. Similarly, the Sword Worlders speak a language that varies somewhat from system to system but is broadly based in the North European and Scandinavian languages of old Earth. It is termed 'Sword Worlder' by outsiders just as the Darrian language is referred to simply as 'Darrian' by outsiders.

The Zhodani have a single language spoken throughout the Zhodani Consulate with almost no variation other than a few technical terms. Most Zhodani who have extensive contact with Imperials speak



Galanglic, though there is a fair amount of unintentional cultural exchange along the borders which means that it is not hard to learn to speak Zhodani. However, most Galanglic speakers sound 'wrong' when speaking Zhodani even if their pronunciation is good. It is as if they fail to 'get' the ideas behind the words they are trying to say. This does not affect the ability to be understood but is a major barrier to fluency.

Most Aslan encountered in the Marches speak Galanglic. Their own language is Trokh, though many humans just refer to it as 'Aslan', which annoys native Trokh speakers in the same way that calling Galanglic 'Human-speak' might irritate an Imperial citizen.

The Vargr have literally dozens of languages, possibly hundreds. The most common in the Marches is Gvegh, which is gradually supplanted by Irilitok the further to Trailing a particular Vargr hails from. Within Gvegh (and Irilitok, and all other Vargr languages) there are considerable variations but the basic form is the same.

The Droyne often decline to communicate with outsiders at all. When they do condescend to deal with others they normally use the language of the people they are dealing with, usually through a Droyne interpreter. It seems that the Droyne have many languages, each local to a given community or world, but according to some scientists all Droyne, even those cut off from others of their kind, speak a common language called Oynprith. It is rarely used in front of outsiders and seems to have some kind of ritual or ceremonial use. It is extremely hard to learn any Droyne language as the Droyne do not normally teach any of their tongues to non-Droyne, if they speak to them at all.

As already noted, a Galanglic speaker can usually make himself understood anywhere in the Marches and most regions just beyond, providing whoever he wants to talk to is willing to communicate. Misunderstandings are possible, however, and it is not always certain that a Galanglic speaker will be available. Many travellers learn a smattering of other tongues, just in case.

## ***THE IMPERIUM IN THE MARCHES***

The majority of worlds in the Spinward Marches are members of the Imperium. Imperial corporations, officials from the various services such as the Bureaucracy, and members of the armed forces are relatively common on those worlds carrying out normal business. Navy patrols are also a fairly common occurrence, especially in systems that are on a major trade route.

Beyond the Imperial border the corporations are still active, though less so, and the Navy makes sweeps into neutral space. The Scout Service is also fairly active outside the Imperium. Local corporations and businesses, whether based in the Imperium or just outside it, often operate across the border without much regard to whether a world is in the Imperium or not. Local regulations vary considerably and matter more than the allegiance of the world.

In this respect the border is a 'soft' one, in that although worlds on the border conduct the same customs checks as any others, they have no obligation to treat trans-border shipping any differently to that coming from within the Imperium. As always, local conditions vary and some worlds choose to impose taxes on cross-border goods which would not be permitted under free-trade laws within the Imperium. This is a local matter and of no interest to the Imperial authorities, so long as internal trade is not affected.

## ***Nobility***

As already noted, there is no Archduke as there is no Domain structure for the Marches to be part of. If there were, it would be the Domain of Deneb and probably administered by one of the sector dukes from the more developed regions closer to the Imperial core, who would be granted the title of Archduke accordingly.

The Marches has the usual system of Imperial nobility in place, with individual worlds represented by barons or marquises and larger groupings administered by an Imperial count answering to the subsector duke. The position of Sector Duke, the most senior of the subsector dukes, which grants additional powers and responsibilities over the entire sector, is not officially assigned in the Marches.

However, the importance of Mora as a trade centre and as the 'Gateway to the Marches' grants that world and its associated subsector a level of importance not matched elsewhere. Thus the role of Sector Duke is carried out semi-officially by Duchess Delphine of Mora. This practice has been in place for centuries by Delphine's ancestors and is commonly accepted as the way things should be. Only those politically opposed to Delphine for whatever reason even question her primacy. She makes a point of not using the title of Sector Duke herself, though many of her supporters unofficially apply it.

Although the Marches remains something of an undeveloped backwater, it is also a frontier region and one that has historically been troubled by various major and minor threats. As a result, many nobles maintain larger household forces (huscarles) than is common practice elsewhere in the Imperium. These forces are still not, for the most part, particularly enormous, and mostly consist of a patrol vessel or two and/or a battalion-sized light infantry force for the more prosperous marquises and counts.

Some nobles, notably Duke Norris of Regina, maintain considerable forces. Duke Norris has a distinguished background in the Imperial Navy and remains dedicated to protecting the frontier from whatever threats may emerge. Some would call him paranoid, but his personal forces have more than once been the first-response formations in a crisis and have a good record. Among them is a unit also known as the 4518<sup>th</sup> Lift Infantry (Duke Norris' Own Huscarles), raised by Duke Norris as part of his personal forces but which spends most of the time on loan to the Imperial Army.



Other nobles loan part of their personal forces to the Imperial army or ships to the Colonial Fleet in the same way that many world governments do, though this practice is relatively rare even in the Marches.

Among the other notable members of the Nobility in the Marches is Leonard Fratelli Bolden–Tukera, Marquis of Aramis. Although ‘merely’ a Marquis associated with a single world, his association with the powerful Tukera family gives him great power. The Tukera family are of course the founders of Tukera Lines, one of the Imperial Megacorporations, and remain principal shareholders.

Although Tukera, like most Megacorporations, has only a limited interest in the Marches this does translate to a large number of ships passing through the bigger ports and a very large amount of money changing hands. Thus far Tukera’s interests are to not push far into the sector but there are rumours of investment in starports which surely presages an expansion of the firm’s operations.

### **Military**

The Spinward Marches is defended by the Spinward Marches sector fleet of the Imperial Navy under the command of Sector Admiral Santanocheev who is based at Mora. Unusually, there is no Depot system in the Marches. Instead the Sector Fleet’s major battle squadrons are mostly deployed well forward at bases in the Regina, Vilis, Lanth and Lunion subsectors, with a strategic reserve in the Trin and Mora subsectors.

Cruiser forces are similarly deployed for the most part, though a significant number are based further back to counter raids like those carried out in the Third Frontier War. Support vessels such as tankers are mainly deployed in the rearward bases along with a fair proportion of the sector fleet’s destroyer strength.

Light vessels such as escorts are largely deployed with the major battle squadrons. The remainder are dispersed throughout the sector for patrol and security work. In this capacity they back up the larger numbers of light vessels available to various subsector commands.

Two semi-independent commands exist. One is the Darrian Squadron, a small force deployed to the Darrian Confederation as a gesture of solidarity. The other is rather larger and includes an entire BatRon, albeit of older capital ships. This force also contains several cruisers and is based in Five Sisters subsector. Its responsibility is to maintain the interdiction of the Droyne worlds at Andor and Candory, and to launch the occasional sweep out to Spinward or Rimward of Imperial territory.

This somewhat dispersed deployment has been criticised in some quarters but there are justifications. One is the maintenance of a ‘fierce face’ to deter aggression. There is also a perceived need to meet any incursion well forward to prevent a repeat of the Third Frontier War, in which the Navy was censured for its perceived lack

of activity. There are those who fear that these deployments are motivated too much by politics rather than military reality, but their protests, though repeatedly made at the court of Duchess Delphine, have not been heeded.

Each subsector that contains any Imperial worlds has a subsector fleet assigned to it. These are numbered rather than named. For example the Imperial 193<sup>rd</sup> Fleet is based at Frenzie and is responsible for the defence and security of the Vilis subsector.

The strength of the subsector fleets varies considerably. Most are built around a core consisting of a cruiser or carrier as flagship, a squadron or two of destroyers and a varying number of escorts and patrol ships. Technically the subsector fleet also contains the system squadrons of worlds that possess them and the security and defence squadrons assigned to naval bases. However, since these are not normally capable of leaving their home system they usually devolve to local control.

The subsector fleets are assigned a mix of vessels supposedly adequate to meet patrol, security and defensive needs within their area of operations. In practice there are always too few of these vessels, and subsector admirals are continually asking for reinforcements or assistance from Sector command. Numbers are also made up by Colonial Fleet vessels, which include Scout Service ships and a few minor combatants on loan from nobles or world governments.

In time of war, some subsector commands could expect to receive cruisers or even battleships transferred from Sector command or brought in as reinforcements for important subsectors. The ‘fortress’ worlds with their own powerful forces should be able to provide for their own defence, but the rest of the subsector would be vulnerable until the Sector Fleet could drive any invaders out.

A significant Marine force is maintained at the naval bases of the sector for deployment at need. These forces are under Navy command and operate in conjunction with naval assets. Imperial Army formations, on the other hand, have an independent command structure.

Like the Navy, the Imperial Army maintains local headquarters in each subsector with a sector HQ at Mora. Major Army forces, including aerospace and orbital defence formations, are deployed to some critical worlds along the frontier, while the remainder of the divisions are based further back. Army detachments of various sizes are deployed throughout the sector on missions as varied as internal security, counterinsurgency and peacekeeping in troubled areas.

There is always some sort of conflict going on somewhere, or else a need for Army personnel to assist in disaster–relief operations. For the most part, however, these are minor operations and the Army as a whole is on a peacetime footing.

## ***Shipping and Communications***

Information and goods both move in much the same manner. They are carried along the major trade routes between the larger ports then spread out to worlds along 'feeder' routes, usually aboard smaller ships as distance from the major routes increases. This is fine for routine cargo, but priority items and important messages are often sent aboard small, fast courier ships that cannot make a profit from standard-rate bulk shipping but can charge a higher fee for fast or secure service.

Most large organisations, corporations, Imperial services and the armed forces, tend to maintain their own courier network. As a rule, information moves along the Xboat routes at a theoretical maximum speed of Jump-4 and on average somewhat slower. Dedicated high-Jump couriers can bring critical information somewhat faster, though at an appropriately high price – Jump-6 couriers are not cheap.

Non-urgent and civilian communications across the Marches are carried in several ways. The Express Boat (Xboat) network carries routine messages in electronic format between the Xboat stations, from where the information spreads out like ripples on a pond. Scout Service vessels and commercial couriers carry 'mail dumps', which are duplicates of all the electronic media to arrive in the past few weeks, to nearby worlds on a regular basis. This means that any given message tends to arrive several times, ensuring that a problem with a given ship or data packet simply means a delay rather than the loss of the data.

Some worlds, which receive fewer vessels, can be weeks or even months behind the times. The story that there is a world that does not know the Fourth Frontier War has ended yet is almost certainly apocryphal, but it is a fact that backwater systems do not get updates very often.

Physical mail and freight can be even less common on some worlds. Many small merchant vessels supplement their income as 'mail ships', which simply means having a dedicated cargo area that must be made available for small packages intended for the destination world if any are waiting to go there. If there are none, mail space can be used for any other purpose. Many worlds are part of 'postal unions' that have a dedicated mail ship (or several) plying between them, which ensures that electronic mail arrives in a timely fashion and physical items reach their destination sooner or later.

Ships are sometimes chartered to take a cargo to a given destination, or a collection of incidentals will often be placed in a standard freighting container and shipped at normal freighting rates whenever a vessel is headed in the right direction. This has occasionally resulted in a vessel delivering a 1-ton shipping container which held only a few small items. It is of no concern to the vessel operator whether the container is full or not; the fee for carrying it is the same.

The other way that goods move around is through speculative trading on the part of shipowners. Rather than take a cargo in return for a flat fee, a ship operator may decide to buy goods at one port and sell them at another, hopefully for a profit. Shipping empty hold space is expensive, so even goods that do not cover these costs can be a better investment than carrying nothing.

Exploratory trade is a special case of speculative trade. In this case a speculative cargo is taken into an area in order to investigate its trade potential. New markets opened up in this way can be very lucrative but the risks are high; there is no guarantee of being able to sell the cargo at all. Exploratory trade is the province of specialist trade scouts and the occasional free trader captain gripped by entrepreneurial spirit.

## ***Megacorps and Smaller Corporations***

The Megacorporations are active in the Spinward Marches. Indeed, it was LSP that first set up a trade base at Mora and opened the way for expansion into the sector. Corporate freighters belonging to Delgado and Tukera run into Mora and then onward up the Spinward Main, though on the whole smaller ships are used for runs deeper into the Marches.

Exceptions include the major lines through to Lunion, Trin and Glisten, and up Coreward towards Rhylanor and Regina. These runs are plied by big Megacorporate freighters and liners as well as smaller ships.

The financial corporations are active wherever there is a need for investment, and those with mining interests (notably LSP and Sternmetal Horizons) have facilities on several mainworlds, outsystem planets and planetoid belts. Similarly, trade and commerce exists everywhere, though many areas of the Marches are not worth Megacorporate interest; they simply do not offer enough return to be worth setting up an operation.

Instellarms has major facilities in the Marches, offering both weaponry to governmental and corporate clients and mercenary services to those needing them. Its regional headquarters is at Mora though many major worlds have an office or other facilities.

As a rule the Megacorporations can be encountered wherever it is worth their while to operate. Low-tech and low-population worlds are not good prospects. Nor are hard-to-reach places. Thus the big firms are mainly restricted to major worlds with good communications links to the rest of the Imperium. This creates a market niche for smaller corporations and minor firms including freelance outfits to make a profit in the gaps between the major players' fields of interest.

Some of the lesser firms and organisations operating in the Marches are listed below:

### AGWORLD COMBINE

A loose trading alliance of agricultural worlds and firms operating in that sector, based out of District 268. The Combine is little more than a collective–bargaining organisation that obtains the use of bulk freighters (usually from McClellan Factors) for its members.

### AKERUT

An anagram of ‘Tukera’, Akerut is a wholly–owned subsidiary of that Megacorporation. It operates a fleet of vessels based out of the Aramis subsector, plying routes into the Imperium and across the border into the Vargr Extents. Akerut, like its parent corporation, maintains facilities within commercial starports, allowing its ships preferential docking at private berths. This has led to a couple of ‘customs irregularities’ in the past but there have been no recent allegations.

### AL MORAI

One of the larger non–Megacorporations of the region, Al Morai is a shipping firm based out of Mora and is often referred to as a ‘sector line’ in merchant–service parlance. This simply means that it serves an area roughly a sector in size. Al Morai vessels operate in Deneb sector as well as much of the Spinward Marches. The firm also conducts exploratory trade, which is more usually the province of smaller lines. It is also one of the few shipping lines to own specialised warships. These ‘route protectors’ are small escort–sized ships that patrol the routes used by Al Morai and accompany some flights. Less well known is the firm’s extensive network of information–gathering assets which pass along what they learn about smuggling and piracy to the Imperial Navy.

### ARKESH SPACERS

Arkesh started out as an alliance of Free Traders which still maintains a nominal headquarters at Strouden however, it has few permanent facilities, relying on leasing or trading for whatever is needed. Arkesh has a bad reputation for highly dubious practices; some of its ships are known smugglers and there are rumours that acts of piracy have been committed by some members. Thus far, the organisation has avoided Imperial attention though some of its members have been prosecuted.

### BARACCAI TECHNUM

The Baraccai Technum (BT) is based out of Trin. It is primarily a manufacturing and transport firm with interests in freighting, cargo brokerage and general shipping. BT maintains a number of ‘trade scouts’ and merchant cruisers set up for exploratory trade cruises beyond the Imperium.

### BILSTEIN YARDS

Bilstein Yards are based on Glisten where they manufacture one–off and small–run starships and custom transport assets of extremely high quality. Bilstein workmanship does not come cheap, and there is an element of prestige in owning not merely a yacht but one built by Bilstein. The firm does not construct warships or standard trade vessels.

### GENERAL SHIPYARDS

A subsidiary of General Products, General Yards is a major contractor to the Imperial Navy and other bulk clients. It is based in Regina subsector with lesser facilities scattered across the sector. The firm has recently begun to emphasise commercial construction over military vessels, perhaps due to rumoured Navy dissatisfaction with certain classes of vessel built by General.

### IMPERIALLINES

Imperiallines is a shipping firm owned by the Imperial family. It mainly serves the major routes, but vessels are sometimes encountered on minor or “feeder” routes and have a number of contracts to the Imperial military and political services. As a result its ships can be encountered even in backwater systems carrying ambassadors, resupplying military installations or carrying out government–related tasks. Imperiallines vessels are very secure and of high quality. Imperiallines is not a Megacorporation but recent growth suggests that it will soon achieve that status.

### MAGNETODYNAMICS

A mid–sized corporation specialising in the extraction of useful chemicals from gas or water suspension, MagnetoDynamics operates a range of facilities across the Marches. These include Jovian Atmosphere Processing Units (JAPU), better known as ‘Sky Rigs’. The latter are grav–suspended platforms which filter and process the atmosphere of gas giant worlds for various useful chemicals. These range from petrochemicals and liquid hydrogen to exotic compounds. MagnetoDynamics also operates on a number of rocky planets, extracting compounds from the atmosphere or oceans.

### MCCLELLAN FACTORS

McClellan Factors is a cartel of trading concerns operating mainly in District 268 under the leadership of McClellan Trading LIC. Some of the firms involved are registered in the Imperium, others are not. McClellan Factors is involved in restrictive practices which would be illegal in the Imperium, though McClellan Trading keeps its nose clean when operating within the Imperium. This involves treading a fine line but seems to be worth it; McClellan Factors has several markets in District 268 sewn up and recently rebuffed an effort by the Baraccai Technum to move into the region.

### NARISKII VEHICLES LIC

Nariskii is a business group based in the Lunion subsector. The firm has its origins in a number of companies that provided new and refurbished all–terrain and grav vehicles to early explorers in the sector. After a long period on the fringes, Nariskii has grown rapidly in the past few years, opening manufacturing plants in several worlds. Products are mostly budget and mid–range utility vehicles ranging from Air/Rafts through ATVs to more humble work trucks.



### OBERLINDES

A 'fledgling' shipping line operating a handful of vessels across Regina and Aramis subsectors and out into the Vargr Extents, Oberlindes is a family concern which has been known to take in free traders seeking a 'home'. As its operations increase in size, Oberlindes risks treading on the toes of Akerut, which operates in the same areas on a much larger scale.

### SPINWARD SALVAGE LIC

Spinward Salvage mainly operates at the Coreward end of the sector, having got its start salvaging wrecks from the Third Frontier War. The firm operates a flotilla of salvage vessels plus spare-parts sales outlets and even a small shipyard that can use new or salvaged parts to construct or modify vessels. The firm also salvages installations such as mining facilities or power plants that are no longer in service. Its overall reputation is good but occasionally freelancers of a more dubious background are employed.

### TREXALON TECHNICAL CONSORTIUM

The TTC is based out of Trexalon in District 268 and is made up of several industrial and business concerns which share a general anti-Imperial outlook. At present this takes the form of hostile economic activity rather than any sort of overt action, though there are rumours that the TTC is considering more robust measures to keep Imperial interests out of District 268.

### VICTORY ARMS LIC

Victory Arms is a small firm specialising in low-cost weaponry in the mid to fairly high tech range. Its manufacturing arm produces a range of cheap small arms that are often found equipping low-budget mercenary firms and an unfortunate number of insurgent organisations. Some world governments have placed large orders for Victory weapons but there have been difficulties in fulfilling these orders. Perhaps as a result Victory is rumoured to be in financial difficulties.

### *Psionics Institutes*

Officially, all research into psionics as well as the teaching and use of psionic talents were prohibited three centuries ago. All overt schools of psionics were closed down, psi-drug corporations were forced to end production, and psionics use in the Imperium more or less came to an end.

It is an open secret that the Imperium continues to conduct psionics research in order to counter the use of psionic powers by foreign agents (such as the Zhodani) or illegal users. It is also widely believed that psionic skills are still taught in underground 'psionics institutes' in the Imperium.

Exactly what constitutes an Institute varies from one case to the next. Some are academic in nature, operating quietly on the fringes of society or under the guise of more legitimate activities. Some are secret societies and some are crazy old hermits or other oddball



characters who occasionally teach their skills to an apprentice. All these 'institutes' have one thing in common – they are illegal and unregulated. There is no guarantee that what appears to be a source of psionic training is not a scam, con, cover for something else, or a genuinely crazy person. It might even be something quite sinister like a cult.

Even where psionics training is genuinely available, it may be flawed or incomplete. Three centuries of underground teaching might have resulted in some serious misconceptions creeping in. There is no-one to complain to if an individual's quest for training in the psionic arts ends badly.

This does not stop a minority of individuals from seeking such training. Most find nothing or come to the attention of the authorities and are discouraged from continuing. Others land themselves in trouble by poking around in the underworld where they assume an Institute can be found or waste large amounts of time and money visiting obscure places, some of which can be dangerous. It is entirely possible to starve to death or be killed by wildlife searching the outback of a frontier world searching for an Institute that ceased to exist centuries ago.



There are, however, sources of psionic training out there for those able to find them. Each one is likely to be very different to any of the others, and the chances of finding one that teaches all disciplines is remote, to say the least. For the psionicist seeking to develop to his or her full potential, the quest for knowledge and suitable teachers is liable to be a lifetime challenge.

### ***Imperial Research Stations***

The Imperium maintains a number of research installations in the Marches. Most are fairly mundane corporate labs in cities of high-population, high-tech worlds, where the staff go home to their very ordinary lives at the end of the day. Others are corporate labs on contract to the Imperium or military facilities located at army or naval bases.

Most do important but unexciting work such as developing improved targeting software for naval applications or pushing the envelope of gravitic technology to wring an extra tenth of a percent efficiency out of gravitic systems. However, there are a number of less ordinary installations which do highly secret research.

These installations are located in remote areas of inhabited planets or on outsystem worlds. They are designated by a Greek letter, for example Research Station Gamma is located on Vanejen in Rhylander subsector. Access is restricted; the surrounding area is normally considered a 'red zone', anyone present without a permit is liable to be arrested and possibly punished for the violation. Lethal force is liable to be used against anyone declining to surrender and be arrested.

The nature of research undertaken at these facilities is highly classified. Most specialise in one area, but this is not always the case. Various wild theories exist about what any given installation does. Most concern exciting subjects like psionics research, biochemical warfare and investigation of Ancients devices. All that is known for certain is that these installations are highly secure and that a lot of money is spent on them. Budgetary allocations are not available for scrutiny other than by a very select group of personnel within the Bureaucracy.

### ***Other Imperial Installations***

Other than military bases, scout service way stations and research institutes, the Imperium has a number of installations within the Marches. Most are located at Highports and major cities, such as embassies, administrative centres and recruiting offices for the various forces and services. The Ministry of Justice also maintains a number of facilities ranging from training centres to prisons.

The latter tend not to be large. Worlds handle their own law enforcement and punishment of offenders, and the Imperium only deals with Imperial felons. Most of the latter are guilty of extremely serious crimes, of which many carry the death penalty. These hardcore prisoners are detained in extremely high-security

installations on asteroids, in remote areas or aboard 'prison hulks' created by gutting a surplus starship of its drives and weapons. Less dangerous perpetrators of significant crimes such as large-scale embezzlement are also detained in these installations. Imprisonment while awaiting trial and as punishment are often in similar circumstances.

Despite a number of accusations and entertainment shows on the subject, the Imperium does not have hundreds of prison hulks filled with political prisoners scattered throughout the Marches. There are relatively few Imperial felonies meriting incarceration in an installation of this kind. The sort of people sent to them are those considered far too dangerous to be dealt with in any other way, or else those with a penchant for escaping custody or otherwise evading punishment and who therefore require special treatment. The cost of supporting these installations is considerable, so they are only used when necessary.

## ***TECHNOLOGY ON THE WORLDS OF THE MARCHES***

Other than in the most isolated cultures, available technology is rarely uniform. The tech level given in a world's UWP represents what can be locally supported. Usually, but not always, this also means what can be locally made. However, some worlds have the technological base to maintain high-tech items but lack the industry to make them.

Note that tech level is an indication of what can be made by local resources, not the limit of what might be encountered. A tech level of, say, 4, does not mean that higher-technology items are not available to at least a segment of the population. It does mean that they cannot be properly maintained using local resources. Nor does it mean that people from a TL2 society will fail to recognise a laser rifle as a weapon; they may well have seen them before and could probably shoot one even if they do not understand how they work.

High-tech imports tend to be expensive and therefore restricted to those who can not only afford to buy them but who are also confident that they can get spares or otherwise obtain suitable maintenance. Imports tend to be either status symbols or useful tools, sometimes both.

Thus the planetary ruler of a low-tech world might buy in a number of grav vehicles for government or personal use, and arm his personal guards with advanced weapons. Aerospace defence equipment and communications gear are both popular imports for low and mid-tech governments, while small arms for a personal bodyguard force are desirable almost everywhere.

There is a ripple-down effect in place with technology, which is a direct consequence of economic reality. Buying in items from a world possessing much higher technology is often pointless.



Maintenance, power and compatibility issues increase logarithmically with tech level differences and the costs may not be affordable. Instead, items tend to be bought in from sources only a tech level or two higher.

This creates a situation where mid-tech worlds can make a modest profit exporting robust and easy-to-use equipment for use on low-tech worlds, while in turn benefiting from higher-technology items bought in from elsewhere.

Imports are never cheap, especially those that give economic benefits, and so the amount of technology that can be bought in is limited by economics. There is no Imperial law about importing technology, other than a range of permit requirements and bureaucratic matters that have more to do with taxation than limiting technology transfers. Thus, providing there are no local laws to the contrary and the proper export paperwork is filled out, there is no reason not to sell a few crateloads of laser carbines to a mob of stone-age primitives. The limiting factor is: do they have anything to pay with?

Of course, when these imported high-tech items wear out or break they cannot be replaced or repaired by local technology. The laser

carbines mentioned above will be so much junk sooner or later, and will not greatly benefit their buyers in the long term unless they can be used to fulfil some important goal.

High-tech imports can be destabilising in this manner; when a state on a balkanised world buys in a shipment of high-tech weapons, the clock starts running. The temptation to use these items before they become useless might result in conflict that might otherwise not happen. However, most shipments are on a fairly small scale; a few hundred assault rifles will not greatly upset the balance of power on a world.

This availability of offworld technology can contribute to a phenomenon known as tech-stagnation. A world that must rely on its own resources tends to progress more quickly in terms of technological development than one that can buy in what is needed along with offworld technicians to operate and maintain it. The incentive to develop the local tech base is reduced by the convenience of importing items, and the budget that might be spent on R&D tends to be redirected into the pockets of the importers and the offworld contractors.

As a general rule, a mix of local and offworld technology can be encountered in the Startown and regions close to the Starport, but the further one goes from this area the less offworld tech is encountered. The local tech level tends to apply to most of a world although there may be 'outback' areas that are below this level.

Even in fairly remote areas, however, it is possible to encounter items of higher technological level than the world's rating would suggest. A mid-tech town might have an imported fusion reactor to power its industry, or a military installation might possess advanced aerospace tracking equipment. Exactly what, if anything, is present depends on local conditions and whether a need for the item is perceived.

The fact that a world has a given tech level does not mean that it exports large quantities of technological items. That requires both technology and industry, and industry needs people. A high-tech world with a low population will probably have a few items available for sale but not in large quantities.

It is not always possible to predict from a world's tech level what items will be encountered in private or government hands. Some worlds do have a fairly uniform tech distribution. On others people may be talking on their imported personal comms while stepping around the droppings of draft animals that pull carts down the dirt streets. Tech level indicates what can be maintained by local resources; it does not mean that someone from a higher tech world is not making a good living as the only repairman for the latest must-have imported technology.



# SUBSECTORS OF THE SPINWARD MARCHES

## INTRODUCTION

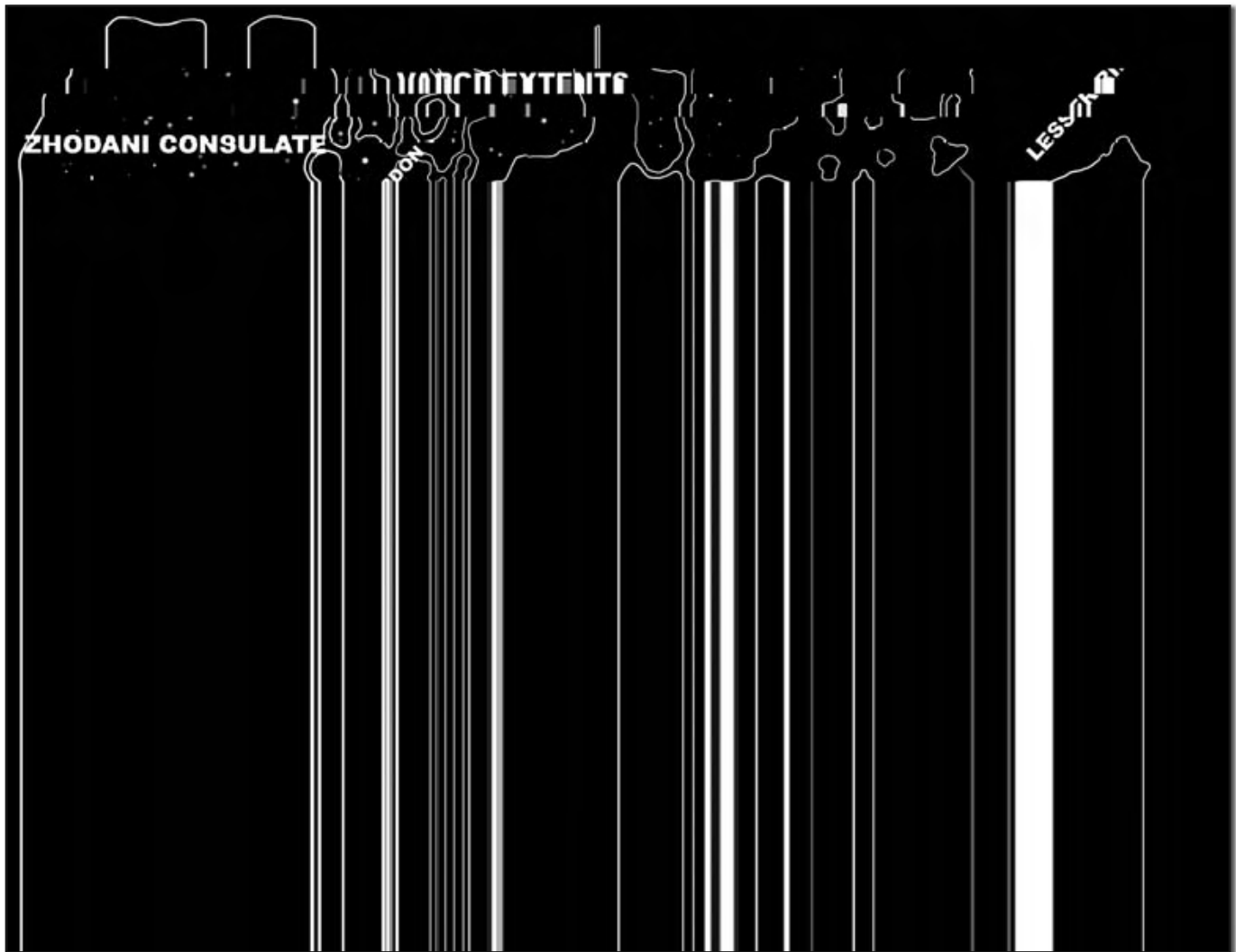
This chapter presents details of the individual subsectors of the Spinward Marches and some of the worlds therein. Subsectors are presented in order from left to right, top to bottom, starting with Cronor subsector in the 'top left' of the map and finishing with Trin's Veil in the 'bottom right'. The layout of these subsectors is shown on page 57.

Of course, the concept of a subsector is an arbitrary one invented by the Imperium for administrative purposes. There are no 'subsector borders' as such and nothing to indicate the precise moment when a group of travellers crosses into a new subsector, other perhaps than emergence from Jump in a system that is part of a different

subsector than they just left. That said, the various subsectors of the Marches all have somewhat different characteristics, as indeed do individual worlds.

Each subsector description includes a brief summary provided before a more detailed description of two of the worlds contained within its borders. These worlds have been chosen for several reasons, some because they are important to the sector as a whole, others because they are representative in some way of similar worlds elsewhere and others because they are unique and worthy of further detail.

A Universal World Profile is provided for each world along with a subsector map, allowing referees to accurately place the worlds of the Spinward Marches for their players.





The Spinward Marches uses Universal World Profiles (UWPs) as set out in the Traveller Core Rulebook on page 170 with some amendments.

### Spinward Marches' Subsectors

There are a number of new base codes in addition to the normal Navy and Scout bases, reflecting the different governments that are present within the sector. They are as follows:

- Z Zhodani
- D Darrian
- B Sword Worlds
- M Independent Military Base
- 2 Both a navy and a scout base are present

The remarks section includes the trade codes for the system plus any unusual facilities and political affiliation. These facilities include:

- Cap The Capital system for that subsector
- IWS Imperial Way Station
- IRS Imperial Research Station
- IP Imperial Prison
- IR Imperial Reservation

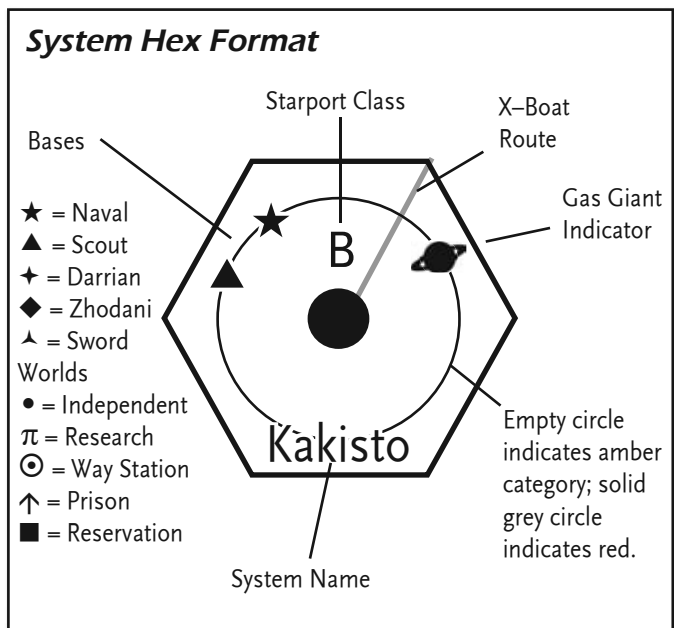
Political affiliations include (independent worlds have no code):

- I Imperial
- Z Zhodani
- D Darrian
- S Sword Worlder

If a system has a gas giant present this is also now included in the UWP as the letter 'G' at the end of the profile.

The system hex format has also been amended to reflect this additional information.

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P



- A Cronor
- B Jewell
- C Regina
- D Aramis
- E Querion
- F Vilis
- G Lanth
- H Rhylanor
- I Darrian
- J Sword Worlds
- K Lunion
- L Mora
- M Five Sisters
- N District 268
- O Glisten
- P Trin's Veil



# ***CRONOR SUBSECTOR***

There are 24 star systems in Cronor Subsector, of which only one, Quar, is a member of the Imperium. Quar is the site of both an Imperial Navy and a Scout Service base even though it is situated within Zhodani territory. This curious situation came about as a result of treaty negotiations at the end of the Frontier Wars. Although there is no Subsector Fleet, the base at Quar is heavily defended. In peacetime it is home to a small flotilla of patrol ships that operate in neutral space and some intelligence-gathering vessels. In wartime the base would probably be used as a forward staging post if it were not quickly eliminated.

The rest of the subsector is either owned by the Zhodani Consulate or is neutral. The neutral worlds are variously influenced by Imperial and Zhodani policies and are sometimes a battleground for overt political manoeuvring or covert action by agents of both sides. Trade ships from the Imperium and the Consulate are also active among these worlds.

Astrographically, there are two main clusters of worlds in the subsector. The five worlds centred on Cipango are actually easier to reach from Imperial space than from the main Consulate holdings in the subsector, as this requires a Jump-3 vessel or a roundabout trip through Whenge. This is not a problem for military ships but it does make access to this cluster and the Zhodani holdings in Jewell subsector for commercial shipping more difficult.

The largest grouping of worlds centres on Cronor (sometimes spelled Chronor by Imperial cartographers) which is the Consulate capital of the subsector and also a major naval base. Cronor has the highest tech level and population in the subsector and is a major economic centre. Unsurprisingly, it is also very heavily protected.

There are also important Consulate naval bases at Errere, Gesentown and Cipango. Major fleet assets are based at these locations. The bases at Atsa, Ninjar and Sheyou are much smaller and play host to patrol vessels and couriers that make the run to Rimward into Querion subsector.

The Zhodani border has been stable in this region for centuries, other than some slight readjustments resulting from conflict. Culturally, worlds that are members of the Consulate have been so for a very long time and are entirely comfortable as members. There are also large numbers of people of Zhodani extraction who live on the neutral worlds. These are not part of the Consulate and in most cases have never been but they are still culturally Zhodani for the most part. Imperial visitors often cannot tell the difference between these non-Consulate Zhodani and their cousins on the other side of the border.

Other groups, living on the same worlds, are not Zhodani in terms of genetics, culture, or both. Sometimes this creates conflict, in other cases the two groups live happily together or remain separate without major difficulties. Each world is different.

To Spinward-Rimward, stellar density drops off quickly. Querion subsector to Rimward is quite sparse and as a result there is little traffic across this gulf other than official couriers and military vessels.

## ***CRONOR A6369A5 D Z***

The Cronor system is the regional capital for the Zhodani Consulate in the Spinward Marches. As such it is heavily protected by both in-system (non-Jump capable) and conventional naval assets as well as elements of the ground forces. A large detachment of what Imperials refer to as the Consular Guard protects governmental installations and stands ready to fight large-scale battles should it ever be required.

Express courier routes known as Postal Routes come in from deeper in the Consulate (via Errere) and are then staged onward into Querion subsector via Atsa and Jewell subsector via Cipango. A minor spur runs Coreward to the naval base at Gesentown.

The Zhodani Consulate does not have a separate Scout Service like the Imperium, so operation of the Postal Routes and similar communications duties are undertaken by naval vessels. These are lightly armed but fast couriers which operate out of a dedicated section of the Cronor naval base.

The Zhodani navy also undertakes a range of scientific and exploration missions, and vessels of this type also operate out of Cronor. Some function as intelligence-gathering assets along the frontier but most are genuine scientific vessels. Although lightly armed and part of the navy these are not combat assets and are no match for a warship of comparable size.

Cronor Naval Base is located on one of Cronor's moons and is very extensive. Not only does it have formidable fortifications for its own defence but there are numerous long-range missile batteries on the surface for the defence of the planet proper. Civilian access to the base and associated moon is entirely prohibited.

Most visitors to Cronor are impressed, indeed staggered, by the size and quality of the Highport. Located in orbit above Cronor, the Highport receives all traffic from outside the Consulate and most from within. Access to the planetary surface is by a shuttle service



operated from the port. Zhodani-registered vessels can obtain permission to proceed directly to the Downport if necessary, foreign ships cannot.

The Highport is a city in space, with residential areas, parks, industrial zones and a full range of facilities for those who live and work there as well as visitors. Clean, efficient and friendly, Cronor Highport is something of a showcase for the Consulate and certainly creates a good first impression. In fact, the Highport is all that most visitors see of the world. Travel to the surface is subtly discouraged and is largely unnecessary given that everything a traveller could want is found in orbit.

Cronor itself is an average-sized world with a very thin atmosphere and plenty of water. Unassisted humans cannot function on the surface, though all that is needed is an air supply or a compressor mask. Most of the populace do not venture outside the huge, sealed cities where they dwell. These are connected by maglev rail links and fast speeders for those important enough to merit them.

The cities are self-contained arcologies for the most part, with millions or tens of millions living in each. There are some smaller settlements but as a rule these have specialist functions. Places where the bulk of the population live and work tend to be large for efficiency and for social reasons.

The cities are all slightly different, but each is a thoroughly pleasant place to be. As at the Highport, there are parks and recreation facilities for public use and the streets are both clean and almost entirely free of crime. Law level is moderately low by Imperial standards and to an outsider there seems to be little in the way of enforcement. Consulate officials explain that this is because rather than policing an unruly population, the Zhodani prefer to solve the problems that lead to crime and unhappiness, making 'fire brigade' style enforcement much less necessary.

The people themselves seem for the most part to not merely be contented but often enthusiastic about what they do for a living or for recreation. Rampant materialism is uncommon; there is an underlying philosophy of 'Don't show me what you have, tell me what you've done' among the Proles and Intendants of the Consulate. Personal achievements count for more than things bought with money.

With a population numbering in the billions, Cronor has a huge and powerful economy which produces high-technology goods for export as well as home use. Some even find their way into Imperial markets, though this is not common. Government takes the normal Zhodani form of officials elected from among and by the class of nobles. This is not really a democratic setup as the franchised class is so small, but nor is it quite the same thing as direct oligarchical rule.

Outside the cities much of Cronor's surface is uninhabited. The population is more concentrated than on many Imperial worlds and this leaves considerable amounts of wilderness between settlements. There is a fair amount of plant life in the wilderness but few higher creatures due to the thin air.

## **PLAVEN E845300 3**

Plaven is a largish world with a thin, tainted atmosphere and a reasonable amount of surface water. It is thus capable of supporting life and as such was settled by small numbers of colonists as the Imperium moved into the Marches. These arrived in typically ad-hoc and disorganised manner, often without proper long-term planning or necessary equipment. Although this sort of semi-random colonisation is discouraged by the Colonial Office, it is not really possible to prevent it along the frontiers.

In the case of Plaven, there was no organised settlement programme. The world was far out on the frontier and by the time it was surveyed interest in expansion was waning. Thus rather than a central and well-organised colonial effort plus a few random groups of land grabbers, there was only the latter. If any given settlement hit hard times there was no-one to turn to for help, with no ICO-sponsored colonial hub to join if the independent effort failed.

Plaven was settled by several groups at various times. Some did reasonably well, others failed and presumably died out or left, or else joined up with other bands and shared their fortunes. The various tiny colonies never reached the critical mass necessary to become stable and to grow, nor to pull in offworld trade.

As a result Plaven's small population struggled on at the subsistence level. High-tech gear wore out and though the colonists adapted to the world's tainted atmosphere, their numbers dwindled steadily. Plaven was passed over by the four Frontier Wars, its nominal allegiance changing hands in treaty negotiations without any effect on the population. Plaven is officially independent and part of the demilitarised zone between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate. If the locals even know about this, chances are they do not care.

Today, Plaven's population is officially listed by the IISS as several hundred people subsisting without formal government, in a number of tiny hamlets and homesteads capable of supporting a steam-powered economy of sorts. There is no law as such, though the locals enforce their own basic code of conduct and have a working society based on the authority of senior family members.

The largest settlement contains about eighty people and is located near a flat area of exposed rock that makes a good, stable landing place for the occasional starship. Water from a nearby stream can be cracked for hydrogen to make fuel. However, there are few reasons for anyone to visit Plaven – it is not even on the way to anywhere – so what might be termed a 'Starport' receives very few ships.

## Cronor Subsector

The official IISS figures for the population of Plaven may not be entirely accurate, of course. Once every few years a Scout ship lands at the port and its personnel try to carry out a population census. Figures for the area around the port are probably accurate; Plaven is one of the few worlds where the IISS census actually lists every resident of the planet by name. However, it is possible that other enclaves exist elsewhere on the planet, perhaps survivors from another colonial settlement that have gone their own way.

If other groups exist, they have thus far avoided official notice and inclusion in the census figures. This could be done easily enough deliberately, but equally could happen through a combination of low technology, remote location and less than zealous surveying by bored IISS crews sent to the far end of the Imperium to count heads on some distant rockball.

It is possible that other groups might have higher or lower tech levels than the official population, though higher tech would have to be deliberately concealed as its emissions would be noticeable to even the most cursory survey. It is known that several remnant sites do exist, where early colonies were set up then were closed down or failed. Occasionally a Free Trader lands at one of these ruins, having mistaken it for a living settlement, and returns to Imperial space with wild tales of a ghost planet or worldwide catastrophe.

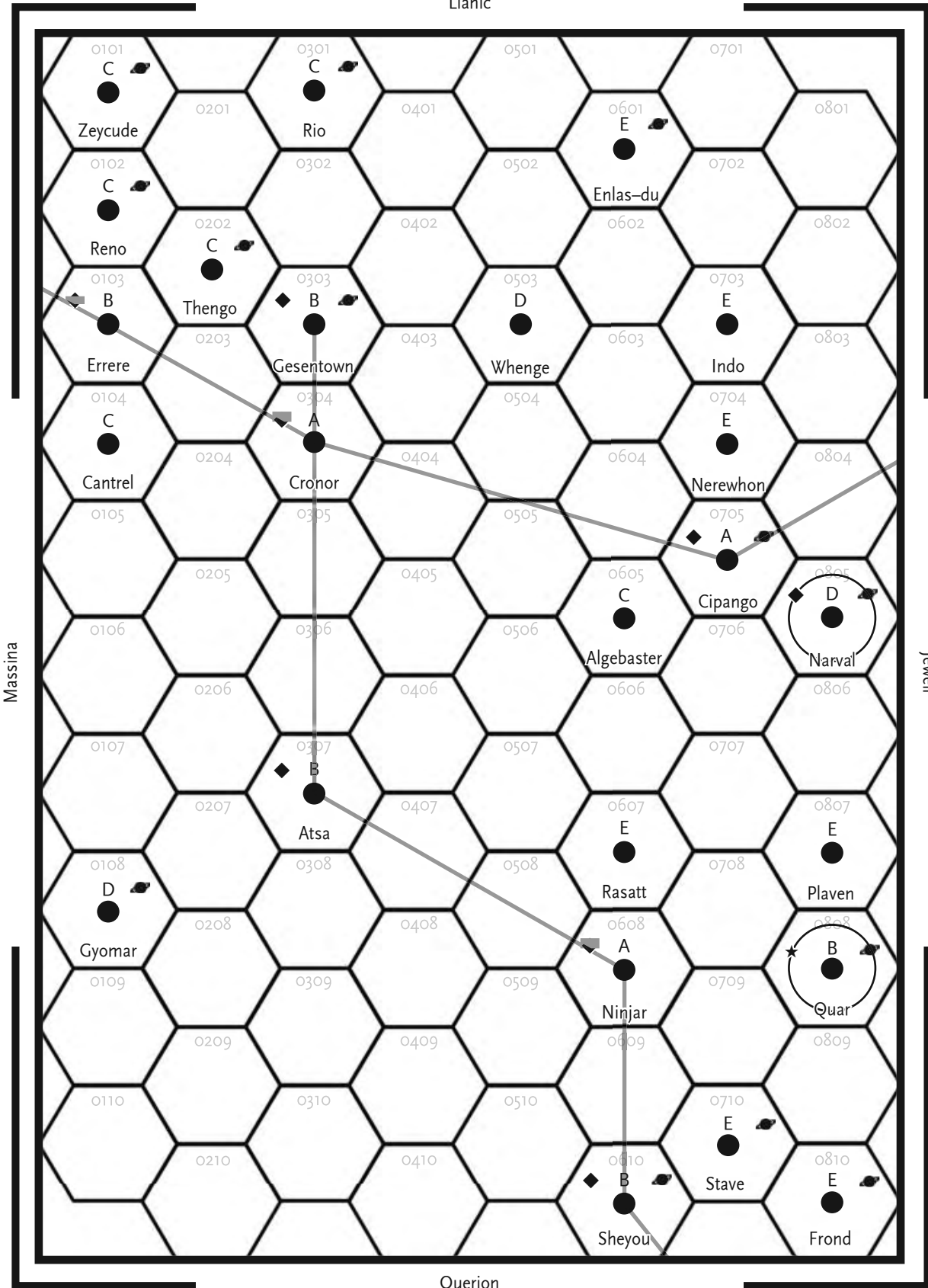
Most of these settlements were stripped long ago for whatever could be salvaged from them. However, some were very remote, beyond the reach of any of the remaining colonies. It is possible that some of these remain intact. The occasional salvage mission is launched by freelancers, usually without much result. There have been some big scores made from time to time however, when a remote colony that failed before its high-tech start-up gear wore out is found.

Plaven briefly came to the attention of the Imperial authorities in 1093, when it was discovered that a group of criminals specialising in starship-borne raids on isolated communities along the frontier were using the world as a base. Although the sort of loot that can be obtained by raiding such minor targets is fairly minimal, the risks are also very small, so what are sometimes referred to as 'spacegoing poultry thieves' sometimes engage in such activity between more lucrative operations. Be that as it may, the band using a valley high in the Varnis Mountains as a base evaded capture for a long time before finally being eliminated in an action by Naval and Marine assets.

After that, Plaven more or less fell off the radar once again, though Imperial patrols from Quar and vessels from the Zhodani Consular Navy occasionally sweep the system. This is infrequent enough that patrols rarely encounter one another. When they do, polite but guarded comms exchanges are normally made before the vessels go about their own business. Harassment and similar 'cold war' tactics are avoided to reduce the chance of another accidental war.

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Zeycude	0101 C330698-9	Z Po De G
Reno	0102 C1207B9-A	Z Po NA G
Errere	0103 B263664-B	Z Ri NI
Cantrel	0104 C366243-9	Z Lo NI
Gyomar	0108 D8B2889-5	Fl Lt G
Thengo	0202 C868586-5	Z Ag Ga NI Lt G
Rio	0301 C686648-8	Ri Ag Ga NI G
Gesentown	0303 B21169B-C	Z Ht NA NI G
Cronor	0304 A6369A5-D	Z Z Hi Ht Cap
Atsa	0307 B4337CA-A	Z Z Po NA
Whenge	0503 D648500-8	Ag Ga NI
Enlas-du	0601 E975776-6	Ag Ga G
Algebaster	0605 C665658-9	Ri Ag NI
Rasatt	0607 E883401-7	NI
Ninjar	0608 A211666-C	Z Z Ht NA NI
Sheyou	0610 B756779-A	Z Z Ag Ga G
Indo	0703 E334662-5	NI Lt
Nerewhon	0704 E738475-7	NI
Cipango	0705 A886865-C	Z Z Ht Ri G
Stave	0710 E7667A8-2	Z Ag Ga Lt G
Narval	0805 D525688-6	Z NI A G
Plaven	0807 E845300-3	Lo NI Lt
Quar	0808 B532720-B	N I Po NA A G
Fronde	0810 E9C3300-9	Fl Lo NI G







# JEWELL SUBSECTOR

Jewell subsector is where the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate meet. Politically, there are three distinct parts to the subsector. The Spinward–Coreward systems are mostly part of the Zhodani Consulate. This group of six worlds form a thin strip of Zhodani territory projecting into the subsector. Farreach, Clan and Chwistyoch are heavily fortified as naval bases and, along with Cipango in Cronor subsector, form what many Imperial observers call the 'Riverland Wall'.

Imperial holdings in the subsector are limited to eight worlds in the middle of the subsector (in Rimward–Coreward terms). Like the Zhodani equivalents, these are heavily protected for the most part, with forward naval bases at Jewell and Mongo and Scout Service bases (known as 'way stations') at Ruby, Emerald, Jewell, Mongo and Lysen.

The scout bases include maintenance facilities for the Xboat service as well as intelligence ships monitoring the frontier. Persistent rumours speak of covert operations launched out of these bases, aimed at adjusting the attitudes of neutral worlds or countering Zhodani activities with the same objectives.

There is no Imperial subsector duke for Jewell subsector. It is instead administered from Regina as an additional area of responsibility for Duke Norris. However, there is a subsector fleet. This is the 212<sup>th</sup> Fleet and is somewhat overstrength for the area it covers. This force is backed up by Sector Fleet assets based at Jewell which include battle squadrons and a contingent of cruisers that are obviously intended for raiding operations into Consulate space if war breaks out again.

The exposed nature of the deployment has earned the 212<sup>th</sup> the nickname of 'Santanocheev's Tripwire' and the suggestion that its role is simply to find out if the Zhodani are serious this time. The latter is a reference to the last two Frontier Wars, in which the Zhodani battle fleets were generally held at the frontier.

The remainder of the subsector is ostensibly neutral, though Imperial access to worlds 'behind the Riverland Wall' is very limited, allowing the Zhodani Consulate much greater influence over Condyole and Puparkin as well as non-aligned worlds in Cronor subsector.

Some of the worlds in the Rimward end of the subsector are coming under the influence of Arden, or more accurately the alliance of political and economic interest groups that is collectively calling itself the Federation of Arden. It is possible that in time some of these worlds may eventually become part of an alliance with Arden. How the Imperium and the Consulate will react to this development (if it occurs at all) remains to be seen.

Esalin is an unusual case. Literally located between the Imperium and the Consulate it was settled by the Imperium in 835 and was captured by the Zhodani in 1082, at the beginning of the Fourth Frontier War. Imperial and Zhodani cultures have become intermingled since and both groups generally get along quite amicably. As a result, a joint communiqué issued in 1098 established Esalin as a neutral and open world which has since enjoyed good relations with both the Consulate and the Imperium.

## **JEWELL A777999 C 2**

Jewell is indeed a thing of great value; a more or less Terra–Prime world marred only by a slight atmospheric taint caused by volcanic outgassing. With very similar gravity and weather conditions to Earth, the world was highly suitable for colonisation. The first settlement was established around 320, and conducted in an ad–hoc manner without Imperial oversight.

It was the discovery of Lanthanum deposits some time later that caused a much more focused colonisation programme to be launched, leading in turn to industrialisation and a rapid advance in technological sophistication. Jewell was also used as a forward base for further expansion into the Cronor subsector.

As tensions with the Zhodani Consulate grew a squadron of naval vessels was deployed to the Jewell system and eventually a base was set up to support them. This was a small installation which was donated to the Scout Service when the Navy built a much larger base around 480.

A larger scout base was set up a few years later, and the original naval facility was abandoned for a long time. Scout vessels from this base worked the communications route back into the Regina subsector via Efate and conducted both exploration and intelligence–gathering operations along the frontier. The Navy meanwhile engaged in 'Cold War' operations along the border, shadowing Zhodani ships and trying to intimidate the Consulate.

When the inevitable conflict finally happened, Jewell was on the front line. The system squadron and Imperial Navy forces put up a valiant fight but could not prevent the capture of the world by the Consulate in 592. Some sources claim that Grand Admiral Olav hault–Plankwell personally led the campaign to retake the world in 603, though others disagree. Contrary to popular docu–drama cliché, he definitely did not take part in the ground fighting to retake the Downport.

Jewell was strongly garrisoned after the war, and has remained so ever since. During the Second Frontier War the world came



under siege for several months (in 617) but held out successfully. Afterward the scale of the world's defences was increased yet again, with the original naval base re-opened and several other facilities constructed throughout the system. Although attacked in the Third and Fourth Frontier Wars, Jewell was able to not only repel the assault fleets but to act as a base for operations into the Zhodani rear, gaining the world the somewhat fanciful media nickname of 'Jewell: Shining Bastion of the Marches' or the rather more mundane 'Imperial Breakwater'. The latter refers to the role of Jewell in blunting Zhodani advances into the Marches.

Today, Jewell is something of an armed camp. Small naval bases throughout the system support squadrons of monitors and system defence boats to deny an intruder access to the system's gas giants for refuelling, while the immediate defence of Jewell itself is entrusted to one of the largest non-Jump capable fleets outside Core sector. In addition, the naval base is home to the heavier elements of the 212<sup>th</sup> Fleet as well as battle and cruiser squadrons from the Sector Fleet.

Jewell is both militarised and heavily industrialised. There are numerous military bases and many high-tech industrial complexes on-planet. Pollution from the latter is now much worse than the original atmospheric taint. Breathing without a filter mask is possible, if unpleasant, and short-term exposure is not a serious problem. However, respiratory diseases and a range of cancers can result from even a few hours' exposure.

Clouds of brown smog are a common sight, and a layer of grime quickly develops on all external surfaces. For this reason the exterior of most structures is simply a functional thing and tends to be both drab and filthy. Buildings on Jewell are built for efficiency without regard to aesthetics, at least on the outside.

The towns and cities of Jewell are like the people to some extent – outwardly unwelcoming, but concealing something very different. When they are able to shed their masks and coveralls the people of Jewell are friendly and hospitable, though not to Zhodani. Vargr are also viewed with suspicion in some quarters. That aside, the typical Jewellite (the term 'Jeweller' is both incorrect and liable to provoke a series of centuries-old puns that nobody finds funny but have become something of a social ritual) is demonstrative, loud and fond of strong drink, especially if there are others to share it with. Those returning to Jewell after an absence often must run a gauntlet of hugs and warm handshakes from people they only met once, accompanied by a barrage of booze.

The six billion or so inhabitants are ruled by a bureaucratic government based on the highly structured system implemented during the rapid-colonisation phase of Jewell's history. Laws are strict and quite robustly enforced, but this causes little resentment. Jewell has been on the front lines in several major wars and its population has a rather unique outlook as a result.

The majority of citizens are members of one or another of the world's reserve military, medical or civil defence organisations. These vary from highly efficient organisations to social clubs, but all share the same general outlook, the feeling that with their traditional enemies just 3 parsecs away, vigilance is indeed the price of peace.

Jewell is easier to get to from the Consulate than the Imperium. Jump-3 vessels can make the crossing into Regina subsector but ships with shorter legs need to either arrange deep-space refuelling or else make a long transit around via neutral space and come in via Plaven and Emerald. As a result the worlds around Jewell have their own microculture to some extent, which also has local variations. It is coloured by Zhodani influences on some worlds, whereas others are vigorously opposed to anything even remotely associated with the 'Joes' as the Zhodani are sometimes known.

## **Louzy D322A88 8**

It is not hard to see how Louzy got its name. A small world with an atmosphere both tainted and too thin to breathe, lacking much in the way of water, it was hardly a garden world nor a prime prospect for colonisation.

Nevertheless, Louzy was indeed colonized, and the colonies grew rapidly. The world proved to be rich in mineral resources, and enjoyed something of a 'gold rush' in the mid 600s as the sector's industrial base was hugely expanded to meet the needs of the Fleet Asset Replacement Programme. FARP was implemented in several sectors which had lost a large proportion of their naval assets in the Civil War or as reinforcements sent to the Marches to assist in fighting the Zhodani.

At that time, the Imperial Navy was facing a crisis. Its strength had been built up steadily, literally over centuries. The massive losses of the Frontier Wars and more importantly the Civil War meant that a large percentage of the fleet needed replacing and fast. System defence assets also required replacement in heavily fought-over systems. Crash-building programmes covered the worst of the deficit within a couple of decades but this created a second crisis as these ships suffered block obsolescence, they all needed replacement at once rather than over time.

All this meant that there was a massive need for mineral resources in the Coreward end of the Marches and significantly at the military shipyards of neighbouring Efate. Huge extraction and ore processing operations were rapidly set up, along with towns for the workers and associated secondary and tertiary industries.

The expansion was extremely rapid; Louzy was a metaphorical goldmine of minerals and the industry of the Marches could not get enough of its riches. Wages were high and living conditions in the mining towns were as good as the corporations could make them. The best 'Corp Towns' were operated by Sternmetal Horizons but other firms followed a similar practice, in order to attract people to the jobs on offer.





It worked. Louzy was the place to go if you needed a job, or if you wanted to learn. Education and training packages were included among the extra benefits offered to workers coming to Louzy. Seemingly every week there was a new mine or processing plant opening up, with new arrivals coming to operate it and seasoned hands taking promotions to head up work gangs in the new facility.

It had to end sooner or later, and by the early 700s the voracious demand for minerals had tailed off somewhat. So had Louzy's massive productivity; the easy-to-access deposits were mined out and some installations had to close. Plus many industrial centres were getting their raw materials elsewhere, at a better price.

Some operations had to close down. Others moved to less viable but still productive sites and carried on. The Megacorps pulled out, to their credit taking care of their own people by moving them to new sites or investing in the corp towns to make them self-sustaining. These former corp-towns ended up in better shape than most settlements as their former corporate owners helped set up a modest industrial base. Most other settlements had little industry outside of the repair workshops for their mining equipment.

The Louzy Slump followed inevitably. The world's riches had come from exporting processed ore and not only was that more difficult to get at, there was little in the way of local manufacturing capacity to make use of the raw materials now that the interstellar market was not buying everything that could be torn out of the ground.

Louzy struggled through some hard times. Its economy was based on ore that needed advanced machinery to mine, and keeping that machinery (as well as the cities themselves) operating ate up much of the money brought in from ore sales. Occasionally fighting broke out over a claim or an attempt to salvage equipment from a previous mining operation.

However, in time things settled down somewhat. A world government was formed out of representatives from the myriad mining settlements, and collective bargaining improved the cashflow situation somewhat. Many smaller settlements were salvaged and closed down, the population migrating to those cities that had industry and services. Most of these were former corp-towns. Careful management of the expansion programme prevented the creation of ready-made slums and ensured that the people that came in from the failing settlements were an asset to local industry rather than a drain on it.

Today, Louzy is strictly-regulated but stable, with a modest mid-tech industrial base exporting some raw materials and an increasing amount of finished goods through the remains of what was once a very extensive starport. The latter is currently rated as a 'D' class port could be refurbished to C or even B class with suitable investment.

The world's main problem is overpopulation in its sprawling cities, which are constructed largely underground to maintain atmospheric

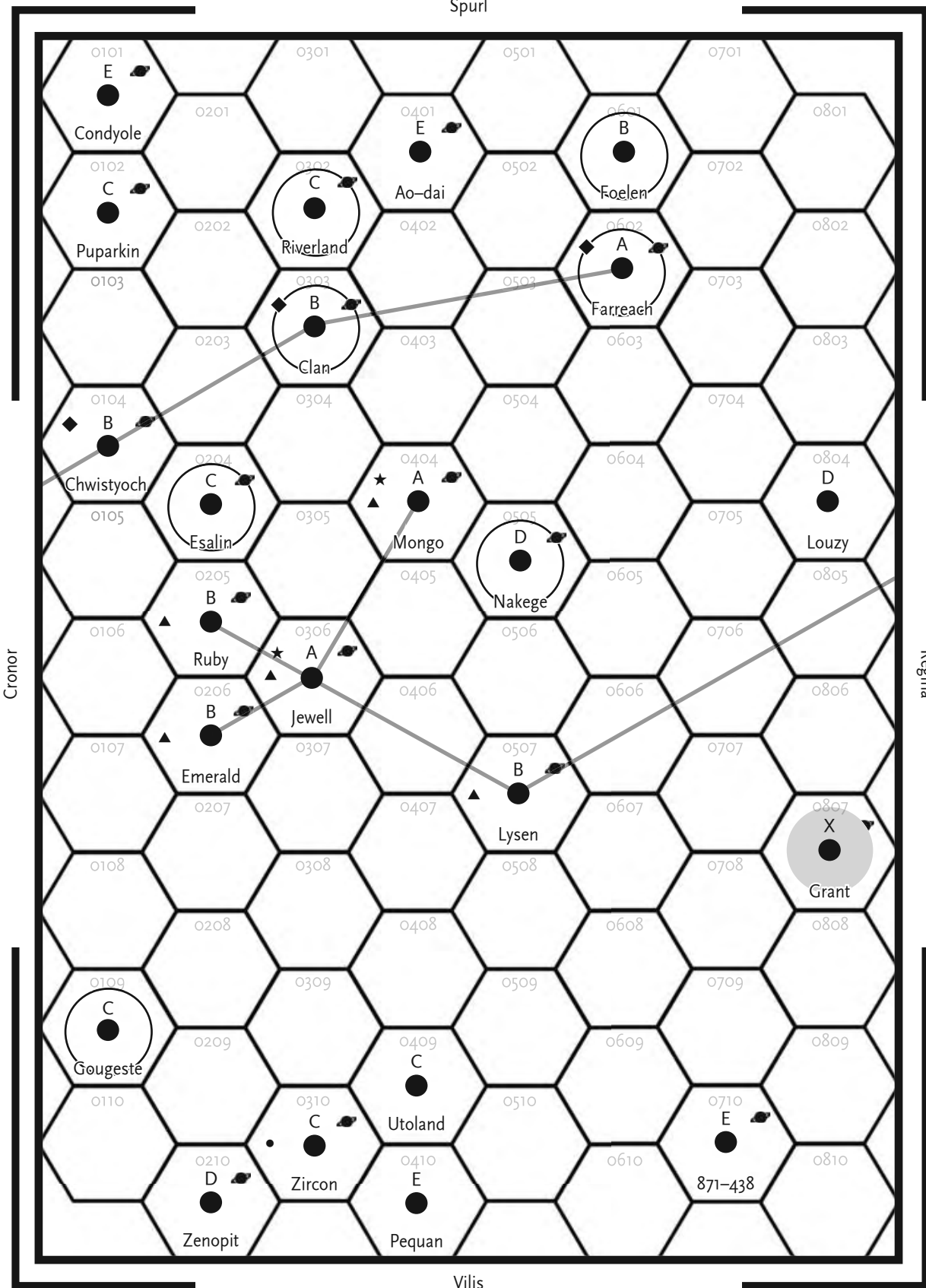
integrity. Money is tight and there is little available for investment, but investment is desperately needed in order to get more from the world's huge population base. Needing money to be able to generate wealth and not being able to get it, Louzy is facing a downward spiral. Crime is on the increase and most citizens feel they have few prospects. It may be that the valiant effort made to halt the great slump has merely slowed it and made the decline more painful.

Efforts are underway to improve matters. Imperial funding and Megacorporate loans have been requested, without much success, though there have been some instances of private concerns moving into Louzy on very favourable terms. The world government seems increasingly willing to entertain distinctly borderline schemes if they will bring in hard cash or help turn around the slow decline.

There is also a steady exodus of people offworld. Some are the best and brightest, using their skills to find a better home for their families. Most, however, are semi-skilled at best. Some simply buy a ticket for anywhere or work passage aboard a passing ship in the hope of finding a new start in a better place. Others are recruited by mercenary units and other relatively high-risk companies seeking personnel. Ironically, the biggest recruiters operating on Louzy are mining companies seeking entry-level workers. Although these recruitment operations are fairly small-scale at present they are expanding. This is a good thing – a few less people is exactly what Louzy needs right now.

### ***Jewell Subsector***

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Condyole	0101 E7A1522-8	Fl NI G
Puparkin	0102 C7B3386-9	Fl Lo NI G
Chwistyoch	0104 B766766-A Z	Z Ri Ag Ga G
Gougeste	0109 C372510-A	NA A
Esalin	0204 C565673-8	Z Ag Ga A G
Ruby	0205 B400445-B S	I NI G
Emerald	0206 B766555-B S	I Ag Ga NI G
Zenopit	0210 D130546-7	Po NI G
Riverland	0302 C566A99-9	Z Hi A G
Clan	0303 B672899-A Z	Z A G
Jewell	0306 A777999-C 2	I Hi Ht In G
Zircon	0310 C791668-9 M	I NI G
Ao-dai	0401 E410644-6	Z NA NI G
Mongo	0404 A368685-A 2	I Ri NI G
Utoland	0409 C473464-7	NI
Pequan	0410 E5656B9-4	Ag Ga NI Lt
Nakege	0505 D591314-2	I Lo NI Lt A G
Lysen	0507 B592655-A S	I NI G
Foelen	0601 B638665-8	Z NI A
Farreach	0602 A200400-B Z	Z NI A G
871-438	0710 E700000-0	Ba NI G
Louzy	0804 D322A88-8	I Hi Po NA NI
Grant	0807 X664100-0	I Lo NI R G





# REGINA SUBSECTOR

Located at the outer edge of the Third Imperium, Regina subsector lies on the main trade routes towards the Zhodani Consulate and the Vargr Extents. An arm of the Spinward Main runs through the Spinward side of the subsector from Rimward before veering to Spinward into Jewell Subsector. A Jump-2 ship can reach any world in the subsector by Jumping from the Main at the appropriate point.

Regina subsector is the responsibility of the 213th Fleet, which has its headquarters at Efate Naval Base. Elements of the Sector Fleet are also deployed at Efate, Regina and Pixie, making Regina subsector one of the best places to spot Imperial capital ships. Indeed, there is a deliberate policy of 'flag-showing' in place, using cruisers and even capital ships rather than the usual smaller vessels.

Almost the entire subsector is Imperial territory; only Ruie is not. Imperial vessels tend to bypass Ruie, heading Coreward by way of Hefry unless they have business on Ruie itself. Ruie is a high-population industrialised mid-tech world which could be a source of considerable exports were it not for internal troubles that have resulted in an Amber Zone advisory being applied to the world. There is no actual restriction associated with this, simply a warning to Imperial travellers that more than the usual level of hazard exists on the world.

Roup is also Amber Zoned. Again there are no restrictions in place, merely a warning to take care. There are also three Red Zones in the subsector, and restrictions are in place regarding access to these. It is possible to find out why a world is Red Zoned – in many cases it is an open secret – and even to obtain a permit to go there. However, this can be quite hazardous. For example Shionthy is generally 'known' (common knowledge may not actually be true) to have particles of antimatter floating free about the system. Contact with one could cause massive damage to a starship, making a Red Zone a sensible precaution.

The reasons for the Red Zones at Algine and Pscias are not commonly disclosed but Pscias is known to have a very low-tech culture and is generally thought to be interdicted by the Scout Service to protect the locals from outside interference. Algine may be interdicted for the same or other reasons; those interested enough to speculate rarely have any concrete information.

General Shipyards, subsidiary of General Products, maintains major shipyards at Efate, Pixie and Regina and is an important employer in the region. This may have serious consequences as General has

recently been hit with a number of lawsuits and complaints regarding the quality of vessels produced for the Imperial Navy and various system squadrons. The cancellation of government orders could have serious consequences for the yards, and thus for the local economy.

## REGINA A788899 C 2

Technically Regina is not a planet but a moon, orbiting the gas giant planet Assiniboia which forms parts of a fairly complex triple star system. The system primary is Lusor, an F7 main sequence star orbited by a dwarf companion named Speck. The third star is Darida, an M6 Red Dwarf star in a very distant orbit.

Darida has its own planetary system including a gas giant and several 'rockball' worlds of varying sizes. There are no habitable planets in the Darida system though there are a few scientific outposts and a small Navy base located on various bodies. The latter is home to a squadron of the Sector Fleet and supporting assets, as well as a larger but constantly changing force of light patrol ships from the subsector fleet. A pool of Navy couriers also operates out of the base, serving both the system administration and the fleets.

The Lusor system also contains various bodies ranging from rockballs to gas giants, but as the most habitable world in the system Regina itself was the first to be colonised and remains the main world not only of the system but also of the subsector.

Regina is the seat of the subsector Duke, currently Duke Norris Aledon. Responsible for a subsector right on the Zhodani and Vargr borders and with a background in the Navy, Duke Norris is more vocal than most in his calls for greater military strength to be deployed to the Marches.

He is also very critical of what he calls 'over-politicisation' of the Sector Fleet and has repeatedly asked for forward-deployed battle squadrons to be pulled back into Lunion or Mora subsectors to create a more elastic defence. This would leave the 'forward' worlds, including Regina, vulnerable but Duke Norris maintains that strong system defence fleets at major worlds should be enough to hold out until a relief force arrives. Thus far Norris' entreaties have fallen on deaf ears, and he is thought to be considering a direct appeal to the Emperor himself.

Regina itself is an earth-sized body with a dense atmosphere and a high surface coverage of water. This made it easy to settle, and within a few years of the first colonists arriving in 75 Regina's



population began to expand quickly. By the time the subsector was incorporated into the Imperium (in 250) the world was the obvious choice as subsector capital.

Since that time Regina has developed steadily, though more as a centre for trade and diplomacy than as an industrial complex. Lying as it does on the Spinward Main, Regina's excellent starport is an important interface between regional trade and that bound for more distant regions. Most ships coming up the Main from Rimward turn around at Regina. A few push on to Extolay or Efate, but for the most part it is more economical to sell cargoes at Regina or to transfer them to smaller vessels for the last leg of the journey.

Many visitors to the Regina system do not go down to the planet. The Highport has everything necessary for business, be it trade, hiring new crew or obtaining a refit. Those that do visit the surface find a comfortable enough environment physically, but one with a rather strangulous legal and governmental system.

The government itself is an impersonal bureaucracy. That is, it operates without much input from the citizens most of the time, and is hamstrung by a complex system of checks and balances to prevent inappropriate governmental actions. This results in a great deal of effort being needed to actually get anything done.

Regina has a vast number of laws, which are proposed by the government but voted into being (or vetoed) by the general population. In theory, old and unnecessary laws are dropped but in practice people only vote on laws that interest or affect them, so there is a great body of obscure and archaic law in place.

Running afoul of the law (current or archaic) is unfortunately rather easy. The police tend to be somewhat over-zealous in arresting large numbers of suspects in connection with any given offence. These people are not brutalised of course; they are innocent until proven guilty. Unfortunately, they are also under suspicion until some time after someone else is found guilty, and trials can take some time to arrange. This makes being arrested very inconvenient for innocent people on Regina.

Only small outposts exist on the other worlds of the Lusor system, but in addition to Regina itself the moons of Assiniboia are inhabited by hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people, but these settlements are considered to be part of Regina for administrative purposes rather than being independent worlds. Their social

and economic importance is very small compared to that of the mainworld with its hundreds of millions of people and the vast trading centre that is the Highport.

There is a sizable Scout base at Regina, co-located with the main Highport. Its main function is to serve the Express Boat network but as is usual with frontier bases it also supports Scout missions along the border and surveys within Imperial territory.

## **KENG E2718CA 3**

Keng fits the popular image of the frontier world in many ways. Lying at the outer edge of a cluster of stars reachable from the Spinward Main by a Jump-2 ship, but only with some difficulty due to Red Zoned worlds and planets with very poor starports along the way, Keng is one of the outer worlds of the Imperium. With the Vargr Extents only a few parsecs away and no really viable destinations to travel onward to, Keng is a dead end as far as travel goes.

For this reason, among others, Keng's colonists never emerged onto the interstellar stage. Although the world was settled by several colony missions, none of the groups that came to Keng really made a go of it. The population increased and spread out, but the technological level gradually fell as the startup equipment wore out before an indigenous technological base was created.

Keng is habitable enough. Though small, it has a standard-density atmosphere whose taint is tolerable to those who have had many generations to become immune to it. Surface water is in short supply, but not sufficiently so to limit human expansion on the planet.

The original settlement pattern was typical of such worlds. Colony missions landed close to water sources, usually where some other resource was also available. This resulted in a number of colonial hubs, from which the population spread out to where there was water available.

With relatively few seas and rivers to limit travel, a steady creep across the surface out from these central points was easy enough. Conversely there was no cheap and easy method of moving heavy loads, as there would have been on a wetter worlds with more watercourses, so the secondary settlements tended to be rather small and set up with what could be easily carried. This limited long-term development into anything other than agricultural towns.



As the population grew and spread, the high-tech equipment of the colonial hubs gradually gave out and was replaced with lower-tech alternatives. Subsequent colony missions repeated the process elsewhere on the planet but there was never quite enough investment to break the process of setup, spread and decline.

Today the population of Keng numbers several hundred million people, dispersed about the planet in several clumps, with large areas of wilderness in between. Each clump has a central city built around the original colony site and a series of rings, each of smaller and smaller towns and villages. Industry, such as it is, is concentrated in the cities while the smaller communities trade agricultural produce for industrial items.

Most of the cities are linked by a vast rail network. Steam trains labour across huge areas of wilderness to maintain contact between the towns and cities. This enables what passes for a world government to maintain control despite the world's low tech level. The ruling elite are sometimes referred to as 'rail barons' by offworlders. Only a few cities have the industrial and technical ability to build and maintain the locomotives, rail manufacturing factories and telegraph stations needed to participate in the work of governance. The remainder are also rated at TL3 by the Scout Service but are towards the bottom end of the classification, while many outlying towns can be considered TL2.

Although local law prohibits the carrying of any weapon within the cities, the outback is an entirely different matter. The government recognises that weapons are necessary for self defence and, equally importantly, trying to take them away from the outback farmers and steaders would be a hazardous proposition.

Keng is by no means a safe world. It has an ecosystem of its own, to which has been added a range of plants and animals of offworld origin. Some come from Terra, some from other worlds. There are a number of predators which are willing to take on adult humans if they get hungry enough, and as a result the farmers of the outlying communities are a tough and resourceful lot who value their weapons greatly. Most are handmade black powder guns from the cities, though a significant number of Keng Outbackers (as they are known) are proficient with the bow or sling.

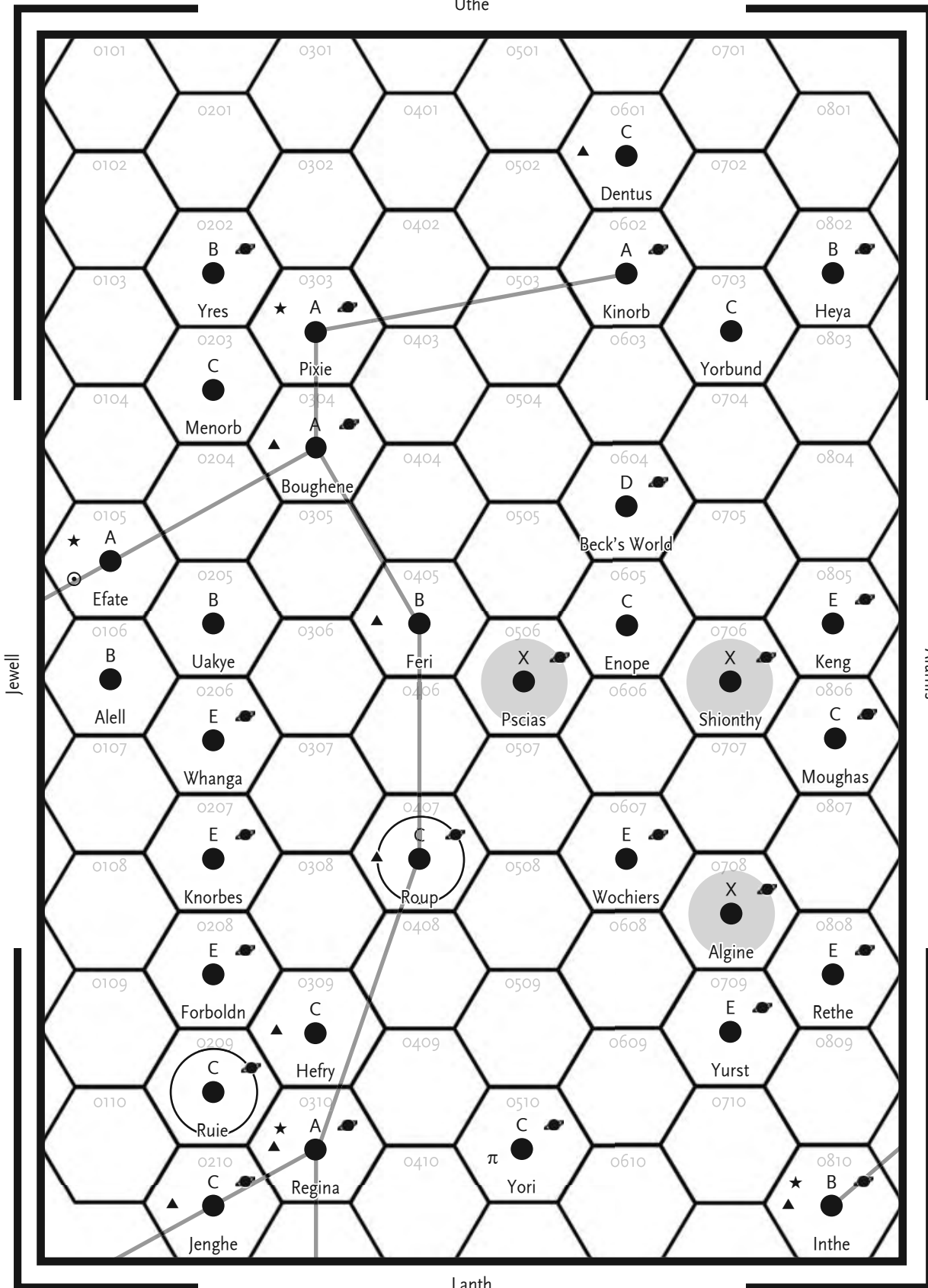
Those trade ships that come through Keng find little on offer in the markets besides agricultural products, which are not available in great enough quantities to make bulk shipping worthwhile. Thus the

world receives few visitors and has virtually no export money coming in. Keng is thus as close to a truly isolated world as it is possible to get; there are hardly any imports because there is nothing to buy them with and no-one coming to the world to sell them anyway.

As a result of this economic and physical isolation, Keng receives almost no notice from the Imperium and simply goes its own way. There are areas of the planet that have hardly been explored or even surveyed from orbit since the days of the first landings centuries ago.

### Regina Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Efate	0105 A646930-D N	I Hi NI IWS
Alell	0106 B46789C-A	I Ri
Yres	0202 BAC6773-7	I Fl G
Menorb	0203 C652998-7	I Hi Po
Uakye	0205 B439598-D	I Ht NI
Whanga	0206 E676126-7	I Lo NI G
Knorbes	0207 E888787-2	I Ri Ag Ga Lt G
Forboldn	0208 E893614-4	I NI Lt G
Ruie	0209 C776977-7	Hi In A G
Jenghe	0210 C799663-9 S	I NI G
Pixie	0303 A100103-D N	I Ht Lo NI G
Boughene	0304 A8B3531-D S	I Fl Ht NI G
Hefry	0309 C200423-7 S	I NI
Regina	0310 A788899-C 2	I Ht Ri Cap G
Feri	0405 B384879-B S	I Ri
Roup	0407 C77A9A9-7 S	I Hi In Wa A G
Pscias	0506 X355423-1	I NI Lt R G
Yori	0510 C360757-A	I De IRS G
Dentus	0601 C979500-A S	I NI
Kinorb	0602 A663659-8	I Ri NI G
Beck's World	0604 D88349D-4	I NI Lt G
Enope	0605 C411988-6	I Hi NI In
Wochiers	0607 EAC28CC-9	I Fl G
Yorbind	0703 C7C6503-7	I Fl NI
Shionthy	0706 X000742-8	I As R G
Algine	0708 X766977-4	I Hi Lt R G
Yurst	0709 E7B4643-5	I Fl NI Lt G
Heya	0802 B687745-5	I Ri Ag Ga Lt G
Keng	0805 E2718CA-3	I Lt G
Moughas	0806 CA5A588-B	I NI Wa G
Rethe	0808 E230AA8-8	I Hi Po NA De G
Inthe	0810 B575776-9 2	I Ag Ga G





# ARAMIS SUBSECTOR

Aramis subsector lies at the Coreward edge of the Marches and also of the Imperium. To Trailing is Pretoria subsector in Deneb sector, Imperial territory, but Coreward is the Vargr Extents. Most Vargr incursions in the four Frontier Wars and most corsair raids in peacetime come though this subsector. As a result the 214<sup>th</sup> Fleet, tasked with the protection of the subsector, attempts to control access through to the rest of the sector.

This activity is mainly concentrated on the Rimward end of the subsector. The fleet is based out of Paya, Natoko and L'Oeul d'Dieu, clearly demonstrating the Navy's lack of interest in the relatively unimportant worlds further Coreward. Navy ships do sweep the more Coreward systems, but not anything like as frequently as the Rimward ones.

Critics of the Imperial system of government like to point out that the Marquis of Aramis is a member of the Tukera family, and Tukera is one of the main Imperial Megacorporations. They suggest that it is not coincidence that Aramis itself has a naval base and is flanked by two others. Imperial Navy officials (and the office of the Marquis of Aramis) dismiss this as a typical example of paranoid anti-Establishment ranting.

Junidy is the homeworld of a minor race called the Lllelwyoly, but colloquially known as 'Dandelions' as a result of their appearance. They are an oddball species falling somewhere between plants and animals, with a highly complex social order that routinely baffles outsiders.

Yebab is home to the Ebokin, who have a matriarchal society with very strict laws and rarely leave their homeworld. They are bilaterally symmetrical, with four pairs of legs and two pairs of arms, and average less than a meter tall although they are about twice as long. The Ebokin are of very little importance in Imperial affairs but Yebab is represented in the same manner as other Imperial worlds.

Four worlds in the subsector are Amber Zoned: Zila, Rugbird, Towers and Reacher, and there are Red Zones in place at Corfu, Zykoca and Lewis. As usual the reasons for the Red Zones are not publicly available.

It is possible that Pysadi may be Amber Zoned in the near future. The world has been dominated for many years by a religious dictatorship that worships the planet itself and imposes a number of very strict laws regarding religious matters. Offworlders have been known to unwittingly fall foul of these laws.

Notably, Pysadian law prohibits alcohol. This raises issues since the world is well known for its fruit crops and, while exported fruit makes good wine, that grown on-planet and fermented there produces some of the finest wines in Charted Space. The government has been cracking down recently on Illegal winemaking operations in remote areas and while this is strictly an internal matter, the lure of big money for Pysadian Atrake wine (made on-planet from Trake fruits) has brought many offworld entrepreneurs to Pysadi in search of their fortune. Recent newscasts about the 'Pysadian Booze Wars' are massively exaggerated but nonetheless offworlders must be careful not to accidentally become involved.

## ARAMIS A6B0556 B 2

Aramis is part of a secondary main lying just off the Coreward-Trailing tip of the Spinward Main. A spur leads Rimward into Rhylanor subsector but the primary arm of this main runs to Trailing across the Rimward end of Pretoria subsector of Deneb sector. This gives Jump-2 access to Pretoria itself and to the very edge of Lamas subsector beyond, though astrology intervenes at that point.

As a result Aramis and the region around it is something of a nexus for trade into Deneb sector as well as the Vargr Extents to Coreward. Considerable quantities of goods come into Aramis Highport from Pretoria subsector via Jump-1 vessels plying the main and are then transhipped aboard Jump-2 vessels via Nutema and Celepina, either onto the Spinward Main or into the Rhylanor cluster.

There is a very healthy brokerage and private shipping industry operating out of Aramis Highport, in addition to the vessels of the mid-level shipping line Akurat. Akurat is a subsidiary of Tukera Lines dedicated to serving this region. Actual Tukera vessels do come this far Coreward, but not frequently. Akurat ships also call at the smaller ports of the Coreward end of the subsector although their main business is done in the more settled areas towards the Rimward ends of Aramis and Pretoria subsectors.

Few vessels proceed to the surface of Aramis, however. The world itself is forbidding, with a corrosive atmosphere and no surface water. Despite this unpromising aspect, several hundred thousand people live in Aramis, underground in comfortable, high-tech and carefully sealed cities.

Aramis is the fief of an important member of the Tukera family, though it is not directly ruled – officially. The Marquis of Aramis is the richest and most powerful member of the ruling class on Aramis,



all of whom are heads of critical industries or important businesses. Thus although the rank of Marquis is an Imperial title and does not confer rulership of the world, the Tukera family and the Marquis in particular dominate all government affairs.

Aramis also hosts both a naval and a scout base. The naval base is co-located with the Highport and acts as the headquarters for the subsector fleet and system squadron, which is not large and is augmented by a handful of system defence boats crewed by Starmercs. These are in service with the Aramis Port Authority but are paid for by donations coming from the office of the Marquis. Heavy units of the Sector Fleet are based elsewhere in the subsector, but there is usually a cruiser or carrier task group in the Aramis system on guardship deployment.

Guardships are deployed for fairly long periods, usually several weeks at a time, and are normally relieved on station by a replacement vessel or task force. It is not possible to maintain many such standing deployments, especially of larger vessels such as heavy cruisers, without diluting naval strength in the region excessively. Most naval deployments are part of a patrol schedule whereby the vessel proceeds through a series of locations in the course of a cruise, staying a few days at each and then moving on to the next destination.

The fact that Aramis enjoys the more or less permanent assignment of a heavy cruiser or similar-sized vessel, along with escorts and supports, suggests that the navy considers it to be a location of great importance. However, there are plenty of other ports which see more trade and a lot of worlds whose industrial base is more important to the Imperium, so what is so special about Aramis?

The answer, at least as far as most cynics are concerned, is that Aramis is the fief of a senior member of a Megacorporate family and is given naval protection as a result of his firm's importance to the economy of the Imperium.

Whether or not this is true, the location of Aramis at the Coreward end of the subsector protects it from the majority of raids launched by corsairs out of the Vargr Extents. Akurat vessels are well defended and are more than a match for a typical merchant-ship-turned-corsair and are generally left alone. However, their very toughness makes them a target for a certain kind of raider captain, who seeks to make a reputation back home as much as a profit from his voyages. Although requiring heavy firepower, good planning and a fair amount of luck, such strikes have occasionally been successful. As a rule, however, the pirates tend to go after easier targets.

The Aramis scout base is not large, being mainly concerned with supporting the Xboat route through from Rhylanor to Pretoria. Survey and exploration vessels do operate out of this base, mainly to monitor and collect data on the Rimward parts of the subsector; affairs to Coreward are the province of the much larger way station at Junidy and the smaller base at Nasemin.

## **JUNIDY B434ABD 9 S**

Junidy lies right on the Coreward edge of the Imperium. It is part of a cluster of worlds accessible with some difficulty by Jump-2 ships coming up from the Coreward end of the subsector or in from Trailing via Pretoria subsector of Deneb sector. Access from Spinward, that is from Regina subsector, is restricted by three or more parsecs of rift across all possible routes.

As a result, Junidy and the surrounding worlds are somewhat cut off from mainstream Imperial culture and receive many visitors from the Vargr Extents. Most are traders or other above-board starfarers, though corsairs from the extents do sometimes try to pass through into the region. The most blatant are forced to either sneak through the frontier zone using wilderness refuelling (obtaining fuel from gas giants or by cracking water for hydrogen which it then liquefied for use as fuel) or must operate on the frontier, making a strike and then disappearing over the border.

However, many corsairs masquerade as legitimate trade ships and these are often able to bluff their way through the patrols and routine inspections at starports along the way, getting into a trade route and picking a target there.

Some organised corsair bands use a combination of these methods, slipping the actual pirate ships in covertly. These heavily armed vessels are not far from being true warships and could never pass as merchants under a Navy inspection. Once within the Imperium, the raiders rendezvous with support vessels that have come through pretending to be legitimate merchants. After a raid, the warships move to the next target area, conceal themselves and wait for a new opportunity while the loot is either sent back aboard the trade ships or taken by them to ports a few parsecs away where it might not be recognised as stolen.

A particularly clever version of this trick has been used on at least two occasions by the Kforuzeng, thought to be the most powerful Vargr corsair band in Gvurrdon sector. The Kforuzeng have been known to stash ships on remote asteroids and leave them in place for a long period until the heat from the last set of raids has died down, then to slip a crew through aboard a merchant vessel. This crew boards the stashed vessel, makes a series of raids and then proceeds homeward after hiding their ship again.

Junidy and similar worlds are on the front line of this sort of activity, and their system defence commanders routinely complain that they receive very little help from the Imperial Navy and yet come in for criticism every time a Vargr corsair vessel that they 'allowed to get through' makes a successful attack. Patrols from the Imperial Navy base at Riacon in Pretoria subsector occasionally cross into the Marches to help out, though this creates a command-jurisdiction issue which is routinely ignored in the name of getting the job done.





Scout vessels from the Way Station also help augment local patrols, usually by retasking survey ships with excellent sensor arrays to watch for intruders sneaking through the system. This is a stop-gap solution that was implemented decades ago and has been left in place for lack of anything better and on the grounds that it actually works fairly well.

The Way Station is a large installation which is mostly concerned with maintaining the communications link into Pretoria subsector and servicing Scout Service vessels. There is also an extensive training facility there, which deals for the most part with Contact & Liaison work and specialises in the study of Vargr subcultures. The base is often used as a jumping-off point for long-range Scout missions into the Vargr Extents or even through them and into the relatively unexplored space beyond. A range of support vessels and scout cruisers are based there, though some have been known to depart on missions of several years' duration and are rarely seen in port.

Junidy itself is a small world with a very thin atmosphere, home to a population numbering around thirty billion of whom about half belong to the minor race normally nicknamed 'Dandelions' or 'Dandies'. Their correct name is Lllelweyoly, as near as humans can pronounce it. The Dandies are adapted to the extremes of temperature experienced by Junidy in the course of its day and display traits of both plant and animal.

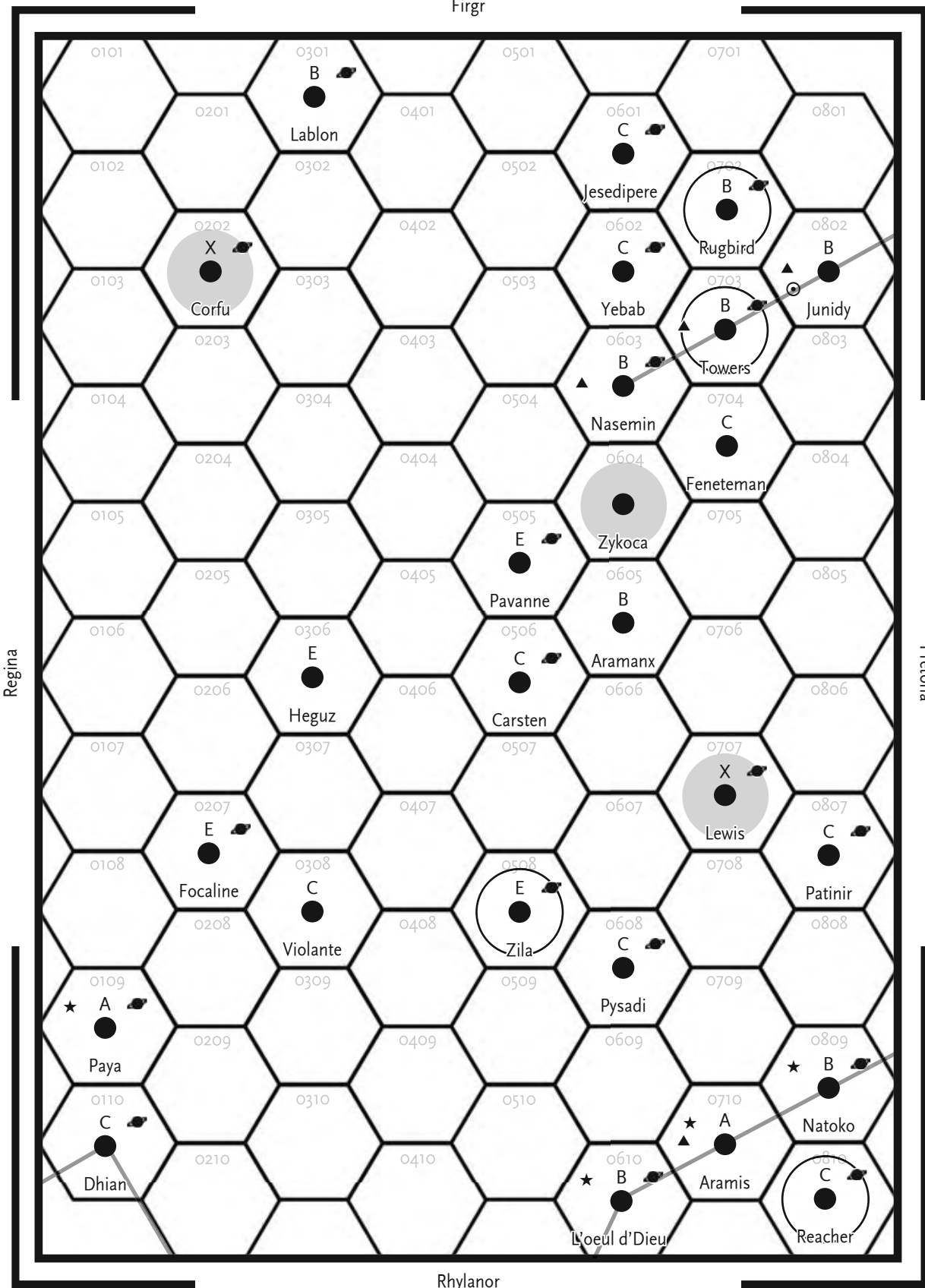
Lllelweyoly have five multi-jointed limbs which house their sense organs and also serve interchangeably as hands and feet. The central, spherical, body is covered with long, coarse hair. These rather odd beings have a tech level 3 culture which is extremely complex. Individuals hold a number of different social ranks each with its own forms of address, depending on the current situation. Using the wrong form of address for an individual's current social status (which can literally change from one minute to the next) is a major social gaffe and can result in ostracism.

The human population has a tech level nine civilisation which is, for the most part, separate from that of the native Dandies. Conflict between the two groups has flared up on several occasions in the past, and even quiet periods are not without tensions and the occasional incident.

## Aramis Subsector

Name		Statistics	Remarks
Paya	0109	A655241-9 N	I Lo NI G
Dhian	0110	C9A769D-4	I Fl NI Lt G
Corfu	0202	X895674-8	I Ag Ga NI R G
Focaline	0207	EA88544-A	I Ag Ga NI G
Labion	0301	B646589-A	I Ag Ga NI G
Heguz	0306	E66A224-C	I Ht Lo NI Wa
Violante	0308	C669452-A	I
Pavanne	0505	E210000-0	I Ba G
Carsten	0506	C427402-B	I NI G
Zila	0508	E25672C-7	I Ag A G
Jesedipere	0601	C775300-7	I Lo NI G
Yebab	0602	C9A489A-7	I Fl G
Nasemin	0603	B98A422-B S	I Wa G
Zykoca	0604	X994542-6	I Ag Ga NI R
Aramanx	0605	B657974-6	I Hi
Pysadi	0608	C4766D7-4	I Ag NI Lt G
L'oeul d'Dieu	0610	B98A510-B N	I NI Wa G
Rugbird	0702	BAC5634-A	I Fl NI A G
Towers	0703	B444448-A S	I NI A G
Feneteman	0704	C222200-C	I Ht Lo Po NI
Lewis	0707	X427402-D	I Ht NI R G
Aramis	0710	A6B0556-B 2	I NI Cap
Junidy	0802	B434ABD-9 S	I Hi IWS
Patinir	0807	C000632-9	I As G
Natoko	0809	B582211-8 N	I Lo NI G
Reacher	0810	C9A8542-8	I Fl NI A G





Regina

Pretoria

Rhylanor



# QUERION SUBSECTOR

Querion subsector lies entirely outside the Imperium. Most of the subsector is claimed by the Zhodani Consulate as an 'area of interest' though if expansion into the area was desired it would have been carried out long ago. Much of this territory was gained at the end of the Third Frontier War. More accurately perhaps, it was given up by the Imperium as the Zhodani Consulate has little interest in acquiring more worlds.

Six worlds in the subsector are formally part of the Consulate and are linked to it by a narrow strip of territory running Coreward through Cronor subsector. The Zhodani naval bases at Rapp's World and Querion represent the most Rimward Zhodani possessions in the Marches.

The remainder of the subsector is mostly neutral, though the Entropic Worlds (Winston, Entrope and Anselhome) are claimed by both the Sword Worlds and the Darrian Confederation. They are at present held by the Sword Worlds Confederation, having been conquered in the Fourth Frontier War.

The Imperium set up a research station (Research Station Delta) at Retinae when that world was part of the Imperium, and has since maintained it as an Imperial possession on an otherwise neutral planet. It is connected to the Imperium by way of a naval courier route through Thanber and is administered from Frenzie in the Vilis subsector. Although the retention of the station was agreed to by the Consulate, alleged violations of the agreement are a frequent cause of Zhodani diplomatic protests.

The subsector is fairly sparse in terms of stellar density and contains mostly mid-tech worlds of little economic or political importance. One exception is Bael, which is rumoured to be the site of large deposits of Lanthanum, which is vital to the manufacture of Jump drives. This has attracted commercial interest from various quarters and a certain amount of competition among freelance prospectors. The world's remote location, requiring a Jump-3 vessel for access, is a barrier to exploitation.

Critics of the Zhodani Consulate and its political system point to the fact that although the Consulate is supposedly stable and works to prevent internal conflict, the population of Asmodeus still managed to break up into factions and fight a nuclear war which smashed the planetary economy and infrastructure and drastically reduced the population. The conflict eventually wound down, more for lack of anything left to fight over than anything else. The Consulate finally beginning a reconstruction effort as the radioactive dust settles, but as the conflict ended a century ago there is little left to rebuild.

The Imperial authorities and the Travellers' Aid Society routinely assign an 'Amber' classification to all star systems outside the Imperial borders, as Imperial citizens do not enjoy the full protection of Imperial High Law on such worlds. Querion subsector can thus be considered an Amber Zone to all Imperials desiring to travel there.

## ENTROPE E336AAA C

Entrope gives its name to the Entropic Worlds, a group of three star systems that have changed owners several times in the past few centuries. Although officially claimed by the Darrian Confederation, Entrope is under occupation by the Sword Worlds Confederation, having been conquered in the Fourth Frontier War.

The political situation is complicated by the fact that the Imperium backs the Darrian claim to the Entropic Worlds and the Zhodani Consulate supports that of the Sword Worlders. This is more to do with politics and alliances than any real belief in the rightness of the claim. Neither side is willing to precipitate an incident by expressing this support in more than polite diplomatic terms, at least not for the present.

A small world with a very thin atmosphere, Entrope was settled in the distant past and has received additional colonists at various times in its history. Despite the need for compressor masks when working outside and sealed environments for living in, the population grew steadily to the present level, numbering tens of billions.

This huge population is jammed into several enormous city-states with smaller communities between them. Many of the latter are domed agricultural settlements, though seabed farming is also extensively used.

The cities are heavily and harshly policed both to deal with the inevitable pressures caused by having so many people in close proximity and to try to keep a lid on the world's internal troubles. Society is heavily factionalised, with alliances between power groups forever changing and violence more or less the norm. Usually this is 'kept in the family', in that real efforts are made not to cause collateral damage when attacking members or facilities of a rival faction. This is a pragmatic measure as much as anything else – collateral casualties result in resentment and no faction needs any more enemies than it already has.

Officially, the world is listed as being ruled by a Charismatic Dictator. However, exactly who this august person may be can change, literally, from one week to the next. Whoever came out on top in the



latest power struggle could be referred to as a Charismatic Dictator in that he or she enjoys considerable support, at least for the time being. However, the political ground on Entrope shifts alarmingly fast.

This factionalisation is one reason why the Entropic Worlds have changed hands so often. The world is capable of constructing powerful defences and a decent system squadron; certainly enough to prevent casual annexation. However, some factions are pro-Darrian, some pro-Sword Worlds and some are sufficiently anti-the others that they would rather side with offworlders than see their rivals in power.

The present dictator's faction have held power more or less constantly since 1084, though there have been several leaders in that time. Revolutions and counter-coups have been put down with assistance from Sword Worlder troops, though not always quickly or easily. At present the ruling faction is presenting the Sword Worlders as offworld allies invited in to help deal with the dangerous rebels that are wrecking Entropic society, a polite fiction that makes the occupation more acceptable to many citizens. There are as many who actively welcome enforced membership of the Sword Worlds Confederation as oppose it.

Annexation, conquest or liberation by either the Darrians or the Sword Worlders has always been accompanied by internal conflict



and usually a coup. This has resulted in a great deal of destruction over the years and some appalling tragedies, such as the breach of city segments during political infighting.

The Starport was a casualty of the 1084 Sword Worlder takeover. A short bombardment wrecked the facility. Although it could be rebuilt using salvaged materials, the occupation forces and the current 'popular dictator' have not made this a priority. The Sword Worlders have annexed a former industrial spaceport for their military use and do not permit access to any other vessels. Non Sword-Worlder ships must land among the rubble of the former port and make do as best they can.

The outer system represents rich, if hazardous, pickings for salvage crews. The wreckage of battles for control of orbital space can be tracked down to wherever it has drifted. Wrecks of this sort can be a lucrative source of under-the-counter military components as well as more legitimate salvage.

The problem is that not only is salvage work in deep space a dangerous business but the Sword Worlders in particular take a dim view of unauthorised salvage, seeing it as desecration of the graves of the honourable dead. Despite this, military salvage does go on and the proceeds often turn up in the seedier starports of the Sword Worlds themselves. At present the gains outweigh the risks.

One problem with deep-space salvage in the Entrope system is that the system has no gas giants. Obtaining fuel without visiting the starport can be a problem. A Jump-2 ship can carry enough to make two Jump-1s, but the more usual solution is to melt ice from a suitable asteroid in the system's belt, than go looking for a suitable wreck with full tanks. This allows a fast escape in the event of a patrol passing by and noticing the salvage ship.

Although this is unlikely, it has happened from time to time. More worrying are the tales of salvage crews closing with a wreck only to find that it is not a derelict warship at all, but the shattered remains of a previous salvage vessel. Whether these tales are true, and whether the victims were destroyed by patrols, in disputes with other salvagers or by some other cause is a cause for nervous speculation.

## **PRINX C436635 6**

Located on the outer Spinward edge of the Marches, Prinx is a small world with a very thin atmosphere which is borderline-breathable to humans at sea level. That is to say, a person without a compressor mask could function for a short period before collapsing. During this period, which would be acutely uncomfortable, the victim would display increasingly severe symptoms of altitude sickness such as confusion, nausea and dizziness. Local animals, such as they are, have adapted to these conditions or evolved in them and are not similarly affected.



The local wildlife is somewhat limited. There are no birds or other flying creatures; the air is too thin to support them. Most larger animals are water-breathers, with few species on land. These are mostly fairly primitive crawling creatures, with few species larger than a cat or small dog.

Much of Prinx' surface is entirely uninhabitable. With such a thin atmosphere, mountains tend not to be eroded and remain sharp-toothed barriers to exploration. There is less soil than on worlds with thicker atmospheres, and while this does not greatly affect life in the valleys, high land tends to be stark and rugged, with little or no vegetation. The surface temperature is also rather low on average so that in many areas the seas freeze to a considerable depth and ice caps cover the land, greatly reducing the amount of usable real estate available to humans.

The settlement of Prinx was a classic example of a land grab that could not be properly supported. The colonists arrived after a long and difficult journey and began setting up home on their new world which, if not outright hostile, was not as welcoming as the mission planners had believed. At least one follow-up mission arrived before the project was curtailed and resources diverted to opening up a more rewarding world.

As a result, the colonists on Prinx were left to go their own way. They did reasonably well, setting up a stable society that gradually expanded to cover an entire subcontinent. Over the centuries the population grew slowly until the present-day level of several million inhabitants was reached. Equilibrium was reached some time ago and, with no population pressure to force expansion, movement outward came to a more or less complete halt.

The subcontinent today known as Lesser Dantterland is thus fairly well settled and 'tamed' for agriculture, and there are scattered settlements out across Greater Dantterland. The rest of the planet is uninhabited and more or less virgin territory.

Within Lesser Dantterland government is by a semi-hereditary ruling caste descended from the original colony leaders. Succession is only semi-hereditary as a ruler can adopt several unrelated individuals into his or her household, who are thereafter considered to be family and eligible for nomination as heirs, representatives and holders of high office. In fact, heirs are less often blood relatives than adopted household members for a variety of complex social reasons.

Prinx was settled by Imperials and, much later, became nominally part of the Zhodani Consulate. Today it is once again independent, although most of the population are not aware of the difference. Zhodani merchant ships (and the odd military patrol) out of Sansibar come through the port from time to time. Imperial ships are less common, though they are not unknown, and Darrian vessels are increasingly frequent.

Some of these ships are en route elsewhere, others come to trade. Offworld trade is not critically important to the economy of Prinx, though it brings in some luxury goods and a little hard cash in return for a range of plant products and minerals.

Darrian ships used to be very rare in Prinxport, but since the middle of the 1050s long-range vessels have begun visiting. They come for three distinct purposes. Most commonly, to trade. This seems odd, since reaching Prinx from Darrian space requires a Jump-3 vessel, and the operators surely cannot be making any money on their trips. Yet still they come.

Other ships pass through and out into Foreven sector to Spinward, presumably headed for the Coreward end of the sector. The third group appear to be exploration vessels. They stop over at Prinxport then conduct some kind of surveying operations over the uninhabited continents of the planet. Queries about what these vessels are looking for are met with politely vague answers about 'ongoing survey projects' and 'researching planetary crust behaviour' that do not serve to enlighten and are obviously not meant to.

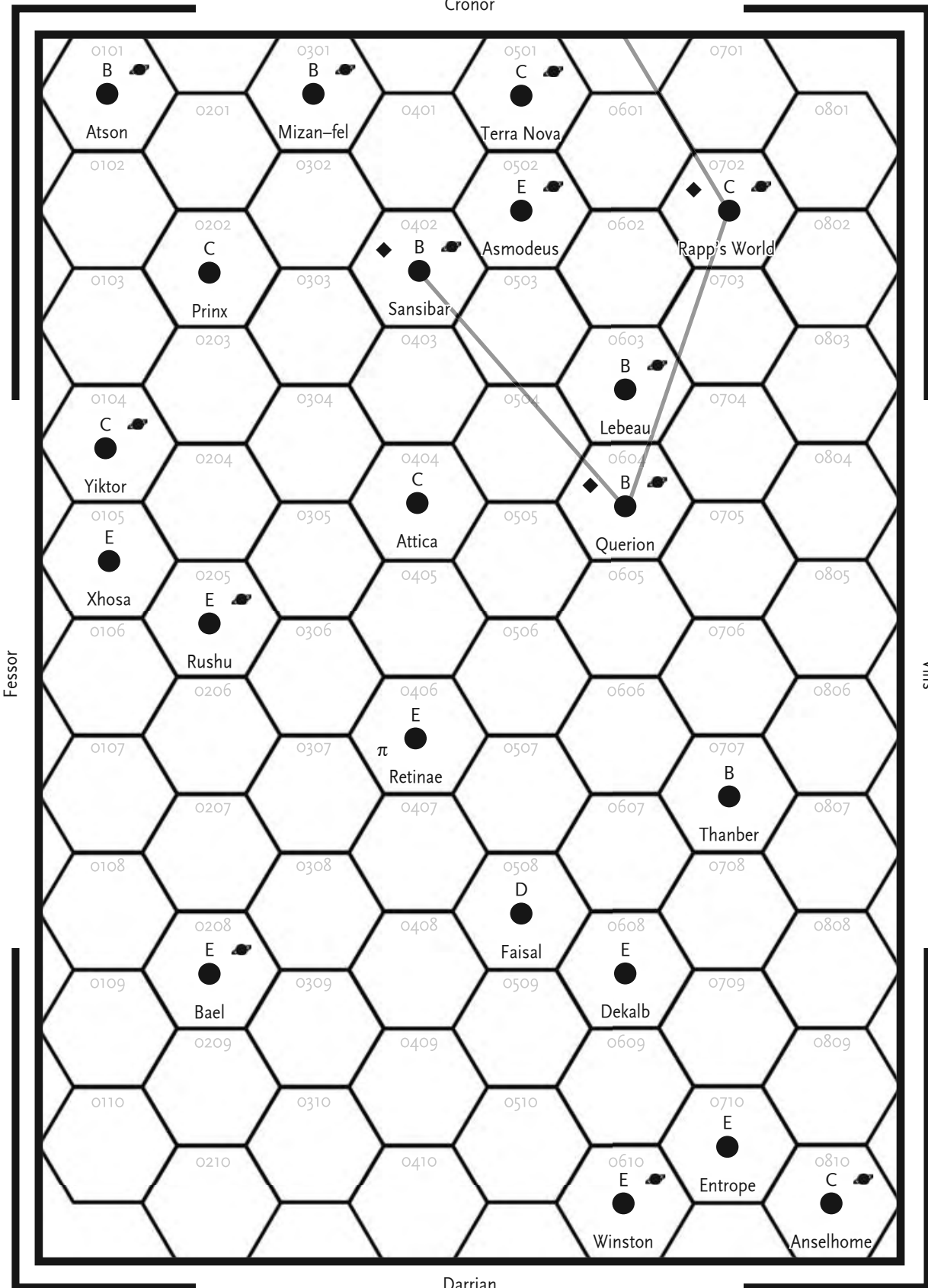
Whatever the Darrians may be up to on Prinx, the locals are not greatly bothered by it. The Darrian crews that come through Prinxport are friendly and courteous, bring in a little offworld cash, and do no harm while they are there. If they want to go surveying ice sheets or mountain ranges that is their business. The locals have all the land they need and a fair bit more; the rest of the planet is somebody else's problem.

### Querion Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Atson	0101 B310598-8	NI G
Yiktor	0104 C6B6431-A	Fl NI G
Xhosa	0105 EA95124-4	Lo NI Lt
Prinx	0202 C436635-6	NI
Rushu	0205 E766674-4	Ri Ag NI Lt G
Bael	0208 E200100-8	Lo NI G
Mizan-fel	0301 B46258A-8	NI G
Sansibar	0402 B200310-A	Z Z Lo NI G
Attica	0404 C400546-8	NI
Retinae	0406 E8C69AA-5	Fl Hi Lt IRS
Terra Nova	0501 C786342-9	Z Lo NI G
Asmodeus	0502 E596400-4	Z Lt G
Faisal	0508 D445436-3	NI Lt
Lebeau	0603 B869554-C	Z Ht NI G
Querion	0604 B254788-9	Z Z Ag G
Dekalb	0608 EA8A799-6	Ri Wa
Winston	0610 E887573-6	S Ag Ga NI G
Rapp's World	0702 C592320-8	Z Z Lo NI G
Thanber	0707 B243653-C	Ht Po NI
Entrope	0710 E336AAA-C	S Hi Ht
Anselhome	0810 C110588-8	S NI G



Cronor



Fessor

Vilis

Darrian



# VILIS SUBSECTOR

Vilis subsector is a border region, with a little less than half of its worlds being Imperial members. The Spinward border is more or less open, since the space in that direction is more or less neutral. Any threat from Spinward–Coreward is mitigated by the fact that the worlds of the Jewell Cluster (in Jewell Subsector) flank any Zhodani advance through the non-aligned systems in that direction.

However, there is a threat from Rimward in the form of the Sword Worlders, who have aligned with the Zhodani on several occasions in the past. This guides strategic thinking to some extent. However the distribution of stars systems in Vilis subsector provides a ‘firebreak’ to Trailing, ensuring that any defeat in Vilis is likely to be a local one.

Preventing such a defeat is the responsibility of the 193<sup>rd</sup> Fleet which is based out of Frenzie, Denotam and Mirriam. Its most likely opponents are the Sword Worlders, whose ships have lower Jump capability than the Zhodani Consulate and other more advanced opponents. Against less mobile fleets a strategy of static defence is possible and the 193<sup>rd</sup> thus maintains a number of guardship deployments in the form of non-Jump-capable monitors supported by tenders but unable to redeploy on their own.

Apart from a single BatRon held at Frenzie as a deterrent, Sector Fleet deployments in Vilis subsector are mainly light units in the destroyer and light-cruiser classes. Such vessels are considered entirely adequate to deal with border incidents with the technologically inferior Sword Worlders and to patrol the Abyss Rift. The Navy is also responsible for maintaining communications with the research station at Retinae and showing the Imperial Sunburst in the neutral ports of Querion subsector.

The world designated 728–907 has been catalogued for a long time but has only recently been properly surveyed. It possesses a viable ecosphere with vegetation and insect life but no higher animals have been detected. The world has been passed to Imperial Colonial Office (ICO) administration with a view to colonisation in the next few decades. Some interest has been forthcoming from Megacorporate officials, notably Sternmetal Horizons, but nothing concrete has yet emerged from the discussions.

Vilis subsector contains three Amber Zoned worlds. This classification is unusual since two of them lie outside the Imperium and would normally be considered Amber Zones anyway. Travellers should therefore use extra caution as conditions must be unusually hazardous to require a specific advisory to be issued. The third Amber Zone, Margesi, lies on the border with the Sword Worlds and is often troubled by incidents spilling out from the Confederation’s rather vigorous internal politics.

Asgard is Red Zoned, and has been for many years. As usual the reason for this has not been released by the authorities but the presence of a low-tech culture suggests that protection of the locals or visiting Imperials is likely to be the reason.

The worlds of the Spinward–Coreward corner of the subsector are gradually coming under the sway of a loose alliance including the government of Arden and usually referred to as the Federation of Arden. As yet this is an unofficial situation but a formal alliance seems to be emerging. Since Arden lies between Imperial and Zhodani holdings, these worlds are of strategic interest and an additional player entering the game is a cause for concern.

## **GARDA–VILIS B978868 A S**

Garda–Vilis was originally named Tanoose when it was settled in –121. However, the colony ran into problems which became steadily worse until the situation could at best be described as disastrous. At this point the government of the nearby world of Vilis came to the rescue and bailed out the failing colony, at the price of becoming a possession of Vilis. The world’s name was changed to Garda–Vilis, which means ‘New Vilis’ in one of the local dialects.

Ever since, Garda–Vilis has been exploited to the benefit of nearby Vilis. Agriculture was encouraged but heavy industry was kept under strict control. Today, all major industrial operations are owned by Vilis, keeping the colony economically dependent.

The world itself is fairly large, with a standard, tainted atmosphere and extensive ocean coverage. This still leaves plenty of room for the populace, numbering somewhat more than 470 million. The majority of the population dwell on the world’s largest continent, mostly around the coasts.

The major population centre and capital has grown up around the world’s large Downport, which also serves a small Imperial scout base. The latter is important as a communications link back into the Imperium via Frenzie, Denotam and thereby into Lanth subsector and as a base of operations for Scout Service vessels in the region.

The government of Garda–Vilis takes the form of an administrative apparatus answering to Vilis itself. The world is run by a council of Vilis army officers, and this is not popular. A rebellion in 1103 was put down by the council, at the cost of what remaining public sympathy the colonial administration still had. Today the only pro-government group on Vilis is the population dwelling in and around the capital as many of these individuals are employed by the Starport or its associated industries.



There is a strong independence movement on Garda-Vilis, calling itself the Tanoose Freedom League (TFL). The harsh measures used in 1103 drove the TFL underground for a time but increased its base of sympathisers among the general population. It has become apparent that some outside agency is smuggling advanced weapons to the TFL and providing training to insurgent units.

The TFL maintains that it is loyal to the Imperium and wants to bring a free Garda-Vilis (or more accurately, a world named Tanoose) into the Imperium. In 1083 the anti-Imperial terrorist Ine Givar organisation approached the TFL with offers of an alliance. The bodies of the Ine Givar agents were found outside the scout base. This was taken as a reminder of both the TFL's pro-Imperial stance and its rejection of the Ine Givar proposal.

However the region around Garda-Vilis is of interest not only to the Imperium but also the Zhodani Consulate, the Sword Worlds and the fledgling Federation of Arden. There have been hints in the past that one or all of these foreign states was interested in events on Garda-Vilis. It is possible that the TFL might align itself with a foreign power if this offered a real chance at independence from Vilis.

Thus far the rebellion on Garda-Vilis has been treated as an internal matter and Imperial Army forces have not been assigned to deal with the matter. Were foreign influences found to be involved that policy might be revised. In the meantime the ruling council is stretched very thin. Local forces have been deemed untrustworthy and disarmed, leaving the Garda-Vilis administration desperately short of manpower at a time of deepening crisis.

Various measures have been suggested to try to mitigate the situation on Garda-Vilis. These range from the use of mercenary forces to augment the Vilis Civil Affairs troops on-planet, a Navy guardship to help intercept the arms shipments coming into the world, or perhaps the appointment of an Imperial noble to represent the world. The latter was vigorously rebuffed by the government of Vilis – colonies do not have their own representatives, they are looked after by their parent world. Assigning a representative would be a step towards recognising Garda-Vilis as an independent world and this is not acceptable to the government that has benefited from having it as a colony for a thousand years or more.

Thus the situation on Garda-Vilis continues to simmer, sometimes violently. With the majority of the population opposed to offworld rule and not greatly benefiting from it, and a ready supply of weapons available for the use of rebels, it would seem to be only a matter of time before things come to a head.



## **ARDEN C5549CB 8**

Arden is a moderate sized world with a thin atmosphere and a rather scanty coverage of surface water. Although not optimal, this mix was sufficient to make Arden a strong candidate for colonisation. Consequently large numbers of settlers arrived in the early years of Imperial expansion into the Marches.

Arden prospered but did not thrive. The population gradually increased up to the modern level of some 1.03 billion but the world never quite became an economic or industrial powerhouse. Nevertheless a solid TL8 economy emerged, finding markets for its goods among lower-tech worlds nearby.

Along the way Arden's governmental structure ossified. Although officially government personnel are elected in practice they can only be elected from among the ranks of the Arden Society, a select group whose members earn their place through financial contributions or service to the ideals of the society.

The Arden Society is dedicated to making Arden a major player on the interstellar stage, and works steadily towards that goal. It controls the government of Arden itself and a number of industrial or economic bodies and in recent years has begun to spread its net beyond Arden itself.





The Society has openly imperialist aspirations, and is currently working to create a 'Federation of Arden' from businesses and shipping lines. In time this federation will, its members hope, include the governments of nearby worlds. Although the project is in its infancy already the Federation has major business assets on nearby worlds and is in a position to influence the making of policy there.

The Federation is particularly influential on Zircon and Utoland in the Jewell subsector and on Caloran in the Vilis subsector. On Caloran, a steady takeover of agricultural-related businesses is underway. Rather than targeting the farms and the landowners themselves, the Federation is insinuating itself into the food-processing industry (such as it is) and edging out local operators by bringing in machinery and techniques from Arden itself. The farmers can continue to raise their crops as before but what passes through the port for export is increasingly under the control of the Federation.

Both Zircon and Utoland are rated as 'non-industrial' by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. Arden-backed industrial concerns, operated by personnel brought in for the purpose, are currently operating on both worlds. The aim is to corner the market in industrial production and make the planetary economies dependent on Arden-owned factories. This far the strategy seems to be paying off.

Agents of the Federation of Arden are active on other worlds too, seeking opportunities for a strategic investment that can later be converted into political influence. In short, Arden is building a political alliance by creating economic dependency.

On Arden itself extremely strict laws and bureaucratic procedures are in place. Enforcement is efficient and vigorous, not least because the Arden Society uses the laws its 'elected' officials pass to keep any prospective rivals from making any sort of credible challenge. Meanwhile the world is undergoing a steady industrial growth, accompanied by investment in an expanded technological base.

Arden is especially interested in starship technology. Its modest Type C starport cannot build ships, though the government yards nearby can maintain, repair and service them using imported parts. Several Arden-based businesses own and operate starships, and the government has acquired a respectable system squadron as well as a handful of small jump-capable warships. Expanding either the military or commercial fleets much further will require an indigenous shipbuilding capability, which is at present beyond the investment capability of Arden.

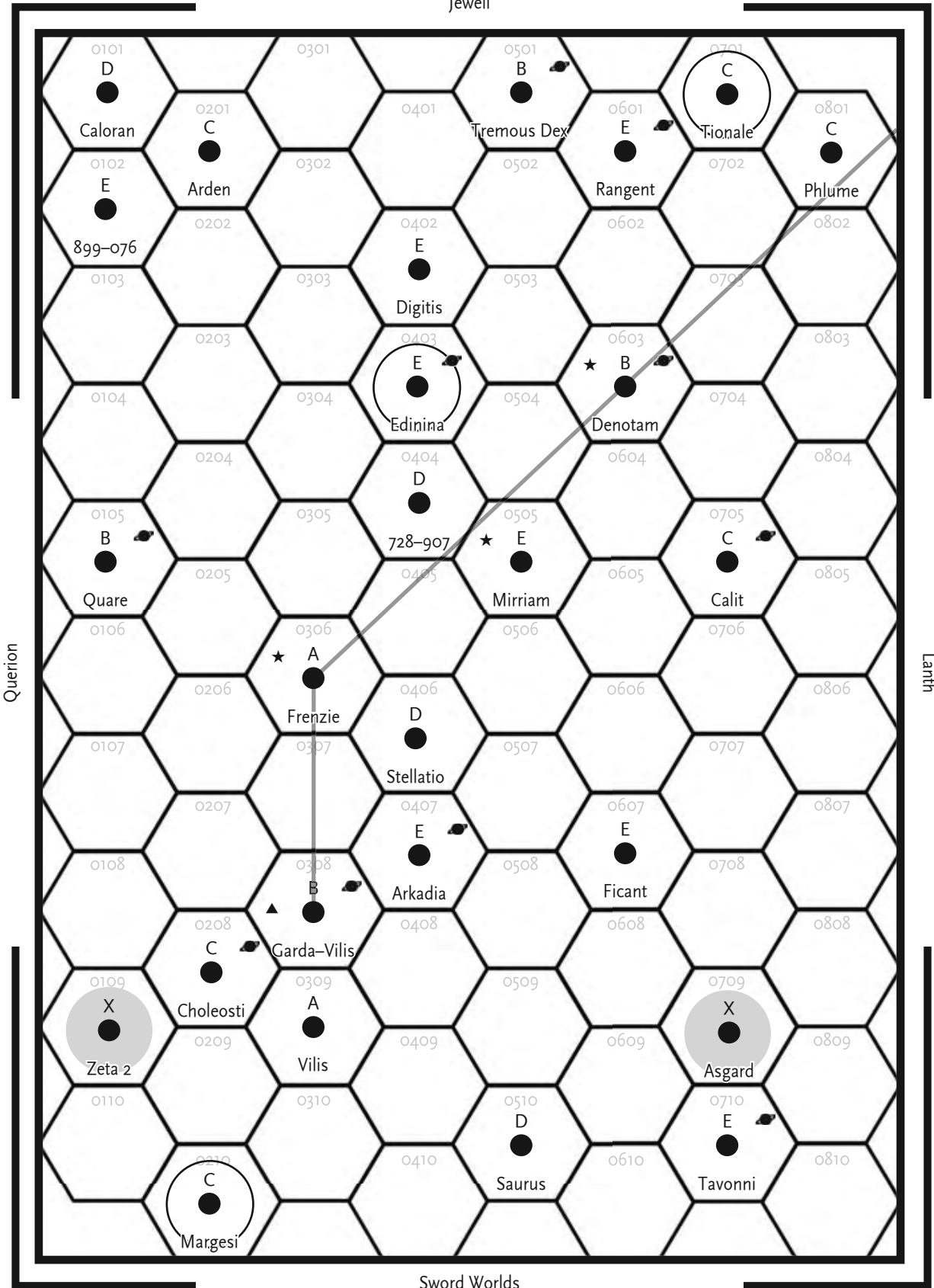
However, the fledgling federation is strategically located in neutral space between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate. It is possible that the Federation may manage to play one off against the other to obtain investment or assistance in necessary industries.

Arden (and its federation) is neither hostile nor friendly towards the Imperium. The same rules are imposed on Imperial ships as on independents passing through. These include import tariffs and other practices that are not permitted within the Imperium and are not levied against businesses friendly to Arden. A number of free trader captains have come to some kind of agreement with Arden, trading nominal membership in the Federation for waiving of tariffs. This ability to conduct preferential trade makes membership attractive to ships plying the local spacelanes, though it is not at present clear what the price tag will eventually be.

### Vilis Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Caloran	0101 D796746-5	Ag Ga Lt
899-076	0102 E201300-8	Lo NI
Quare	0105 B200545-9	NI G
Zeta 2	0109 X6B0000-0	Ba NI R
Arden	0201 C5549CB-8	Hi
Choleosti	0208 C200100-9	I Lo NI G
Margesi	0210 C575677-6	I Ag Ga NI A
Frenzie	0306 A200436-A N	I NI Cap
Garda-Vilis	0308 B978868-A S	I G
Vilis	0309 A593943-A	I Hi In
Digitis	0402 E53668A-5	NI Lt
Edinina	0403 E400220-5	Lo NI Lt A G
728-907	0404 D955000-0	I Ba NI
Stellatio	0406 D5A4420-4	I Fl NI Lt
Arkadia	0407 E446845-6	I G
Tremous Dex	0501 B511411-C	Ht NI G
Mirriam	0505 E472300-8 N	I Lo NI
Saurus	0510 D888588-7	I Ag Ga NI
Rangent	0601 E67A612-7	NI Wa G
Denotam	0603 B739573-A N	I NI G
Ficant	0607 E567353-5	I Lo NI Lt
Tionale	0701 C674321-8	Lo NI A
Calit	0705 C334867-7	I G
Asgard	0709 X3437C7-2	I Po Lt R
Tavonni	0710 E567000-0	I Ba NI G
Phlume	0801 C887624-8	I Ag Ga NI

Jewell



Sword Worlds



# LANTH SUBSECTOR

Lanth subsector has two contrasting regions. Most of the subsector is very sparse, but the Coreward and Trailing edges of the subsector are dominated by the Spinward Main, which branches at Tureded. Traffic bound for Rhylanor subsector and beyond heads out to Coreward–Trailing while the primary arm of the Main loops away to Spinward giving access to Regina, Jewell, Vilis and ultimately Querion subsectors.

As a consequence of its strategic position Tureded sees a great deal of traffic coming through its small port, more than such a minor installation can really deal with. An upgrade is long overdue and has been delayed as much as anything by the independent nature of the locals, who are not keen on an influx of offworlders even if they arrive with bucketfuls of cash. It is likely that the port will be expanded soon whatever the locals think of the idea, perhaps causing friction between the existing population and those who come to work at the expanded facility.

Traffic on the Spinward Main is considerable, but the rest of the subsector is inaccessible to ships capable of less than Jump–3 or 4. Thus although the Xboat route and naval patrols can cross the subsector quickly, commercial traffic has to take the long way round. The sparse area in the Spinward and Rimward ends of the subsector is known as the Abyss Rift, and seems to deserve its somewhat dramatic name.

Curious Jump–related phenomena have been reported in this region for centuries, often by reliable witnesses. Scout Service Xboat pilots plying the Trans–Abyss Rift route have filed reports ranging from radio signals received (impossible) to ‘something on the hull, trying to get in’ (positively crazed) while in Jumpspace. This does beg the question of whether someone who has spent a week alone in Jumpspace is a reliable witness or not.

Despite the bad reputation of the region, the main naval bases for the subsector fleet (the 18<sup>th</sup>) and those elements of the Sector Fleet that are deployed to Lanth subsector are located in the Rift or along its edge at Ivendo, D’Ganzio, Lanth and Ghandi.

All the worlds in Lanth subsector are Imperial members. Three (Wypoc, Quopist and Rhise) are Amber Zoned at present for various reasons. There are also four Red Zones of which three (Ylaven, Victoria and Sonthert) lie within the Abyss Rift. A certain segment of the population takes this as additional proof that the rift is a very bad place where awful things happen.

The fourth Red Zone, Djinni, is an uninhabited but apparently habitable world on the Spinward Main. The Red Zone makes access to Yori in the Regina subsector problematical for Jump–1 ships.

Vessels approaching the world are warned off and directed to the system’s gas giants to skim fuel. Those which cannot do this are permitted to refuel from a small tanker kept on standby for the purpose, though they are charged over the odds for the privilege. As usual the Imperial authorities are not forthcoming about why they go to such trouble to keep visitors away from Djinni.

## **DINOM D100535 A**

Dinom is a typical ‘rockball’ world. It is a member of the Imperium under the governance of the Dinom Corporation. Settled for economic reasons it is officially listed as an oligarchy in the IISS database but could be considered a corporate state in which the main shareholders and owners of facilities make up a sort of planetary nobility.

The planetary economy is based on mining and ore processing, and the owners of the major ore–handling plants, mines and industrial facilities more or less constitute the government. The World Board, as it is known, does have some representation for those who are not shareholders in the main economic assets of the world and for the small populations dwelling outside the main cities, but for the most part their voices are drowned out by those of the major shareholders in the Dinom Corporation.

Orbiting at a considerable distance from a very bright star, Dinom is far too small to retain an atmosphere of any kind, and therefore lacking in liquid water. It is a rogue planet, which was once a moon of the system’s gas giant. Having been perturbed out of its orbit, it was then captured in the gas giant’s trailing Trojan point and follows the much bigger world around in its orbit.

Dinom’s polar axis points towards the star, which is little more than a bright disc in the sky. It does put out enough energy to make the pole pointed towards the star very hot, while the other pole is constantly exposed to the cold of space. Dinom thus has a ‘bright face’ and a ‘cold face’ as well as a zone of twilight along the equator where temperatures are less extreme. All major settlements are built in this zone.

There are three major cities on Dinom, with a total population of somewhat less than 250,000. Most of the population live and work in these cities, which are connected by a monorail link, Or rather, will be connected by it ‘very soon’. The monorail system has been due for completion ‘very soon’ for what seems like an inordinately long time and cynics suggest that it will never be completed.

There are an unfortunately large number of cynics on Dinom. Although wages are good, many people are ceasing to see Dinom



as a place to earn a salary and to consider it their home instead. This shift in perception has increased disaffection among the populace, who (probably correctly) believe that the Dinom Corporation is all about wringing profit out of the world rather than looking after the interests of the people who live there.

At present the unrest takes the form of grumbling, labour disputes over minor issues that would have been ignored or cleared up in minutes just a few years ago, and the occasional strike. The World Board has made a number of concessions to the workers, which has caused the problems to quieten down for the time being, but has not addressed the major issues regarding Dinom—as-home rather than Dinom—as-workplace.

The World Board believes that it is simply not cost-effective to implement social programmes and to improve Dinom as a place to live. In this, they are probably correct. The Dinom Corporation looks after its workers well enough but does not see the need to consider the long-term development of the world as something other than a corporate mining installation on a huge scale.

There are those who have begun suggesting that what Dinom needs is a change of government. This hypothetical new government would of course allow the Dinom Corporation to continue its operations, but would spend much more on long-term social development. The World Board is unlikely to accept this proposal and in any case it is unworkable. The money for these programmes would have to come from the only real source of wealth on the planet – the Dinom Corporation.

Thus the situation continues much as it always has, with increasingly poor relations between the corporation and some segments of the population. Both maintain that what the other wants is unworkable and unreasonable, and both may in fact be correct.

While the major processing works are located in the equatorial cities, there are small settlements a short way into the cold and bright faces. The only reasons to venture outside the relatively safe equatorial zone are economic. There are extensive mines and towns to support them located quite deep in the hot and cold zones, wherever the resources to be found there justify them.

On the cold face, there are of course the usual veins and deposits of minerals to be dug out of the ground, and in addition it is possible to extract frozen gases from deposits on the ground. These are purified and shipped in solid form or piped as liquids back to the processing centres for a variety of industrial uses.

Operating on the cold face is hazardous. In addition to the usual dangers of an airless world such as dust pools that seem only centimetres deep, micrometeorite showers and the occasional deep crevasse, super-cold terrain of this sort has its own unique ways to harm unwary travellers.

Cold face hazards include lakes of frozen gas that will rapidly sublime when exposed to heat, such as that inevitably given off by an ATV. Deep crevasses are also possible, where the rock has been split by explosive sublimation in the past. This occurs when a deposit of frozen gas is exposed to heat, such as that from the system's star. Dinom's orientation towards the star is gradually changing so this occurs at regular but very infrequent intervals.

The bright face is, if anything, more dangerous. However, the extremely high temperatures there are beneficial in some ways when mining for metals. Conventional mining is carried out, and there are other, less commonplace, ways to obtain minerals in this environment.

It is possible to encounter pools of liquid metal which can simply be piped into holding tanks. Such metals tend to be those with a lower melting point but pool-draining is a quick way to obtain a fairly large amount of metal. The occasional geyser of molten metal is far more hazardous, though if the period of the geyser can be predicted it is possible to send in teams to harvest the clumps of solidified metal after an eruption. This is dangerous but has the advantage that the metal so obtained tends to be very pure.

## **VICTORIA X697772 2**

Victoria lies in the Abyss Rift in Lanth subsector, just off the Lanth-Ghandi-Dinomn Xboat route. It is one of four Red Zoned worlds in the subsector and is maintained by Imperial Navy vessels out of Lanth or Ghandi. There is almost always a guardship in the vicinity of the world, plus interdiction satellites that monitor traffic in and out. Occasionally additional vessels sweep other parts of the system, but this is no more frequent than any other system and is probably part of the Navy's routine internal security operation. Official naval sources, as usual, refuse to comment.

The guardship is usually a small vessel such as a Patrol Cruiser or Close Escort. The subsector fleet has a huge section of the Spinward Main to patrol and the Sector Fleet is mainly concerned with the Sword Worlds, just a few parsecs away. Neither can spare large numbers of vessels to monitor an unimportant planet in the middle of nowhere.

Victoria itself is a very old world orbiting an old star, and is deficient in heavy minerals and metals as a result. Despite this it has a dense atmosphere, which carries a taint capable of defeating most conventional filters. Fortunately this taint exists mainly at low altitudes. Above 1000 metres the atmosphere is safe to breathe. Below this, an oxygen supply or a fully sealed environment suit is needed.

The human population numbers about ten million as near as can be estimated. The people dwell on high ground, mainly in a region known as The Mesas as it consists of a series of high mesas. There is no world government; different groups each have their own way



of doing things that can range from oligarchies and dictatorships to democracies and even voluntary anarchy.

Likewise the law level of 2 is an estimated average. Some areas have very strict laws; most do not. Similarly technology varies somewhat from place to place, though always limited by the scarcity of metals. Balloons and dirigibles, sometimes powered by hand-cranked propellers, have made travel possible between areas previously cut off by low ground.

Victoria was probably colonised around -1450 and was isolated for a long time. Even after the Imperium settled the Marches the world received few visitors as a result of its remote location. In 901 the IISS made a survey of the world and shortly afterward a Red Zone was declared. While the Navy does not discuss the reasons for Red Zoning, the Scout Service is a little more forthcoming. In the case of Victoria the given reason was to protect the people of the world from outside influence as they struggled to deal with their metal-poor environment.

However, there is something else interesting about Victoria. This may be why the Navy monitors the Red Zone rather than the Scouts, though Scout vessels do sometimes visit the world. Normally a Red Zone imposed at the request of the Scout Service is monitored by their vessels and personnel; the reasons are usually protective or scientific. Navy-monitored Red Zones are normally for political or security reasons, or to keep people away from an area of strategic importance to the Imperium.

It appears that around 300,000 years ago, at a time coinciding with the disappearance of the Ancients, Victoria was heavily bombarded from space using a variety of weapons but most notably asteroids as 'deadfall ordnance'. This is a technical term for dropping a heavy object from orbit.

The bombardment resulted in a number of immense craters, some of which are today seas or great lakes. Others are not obvious as they lie on the seabed. The Mesas area was caused by a strike that cracked the planetary crust and caused lava to surge up before cooling, creating the unusual pattern of high areas separated by chasms which are quite deep but often only 500-2000m wide.

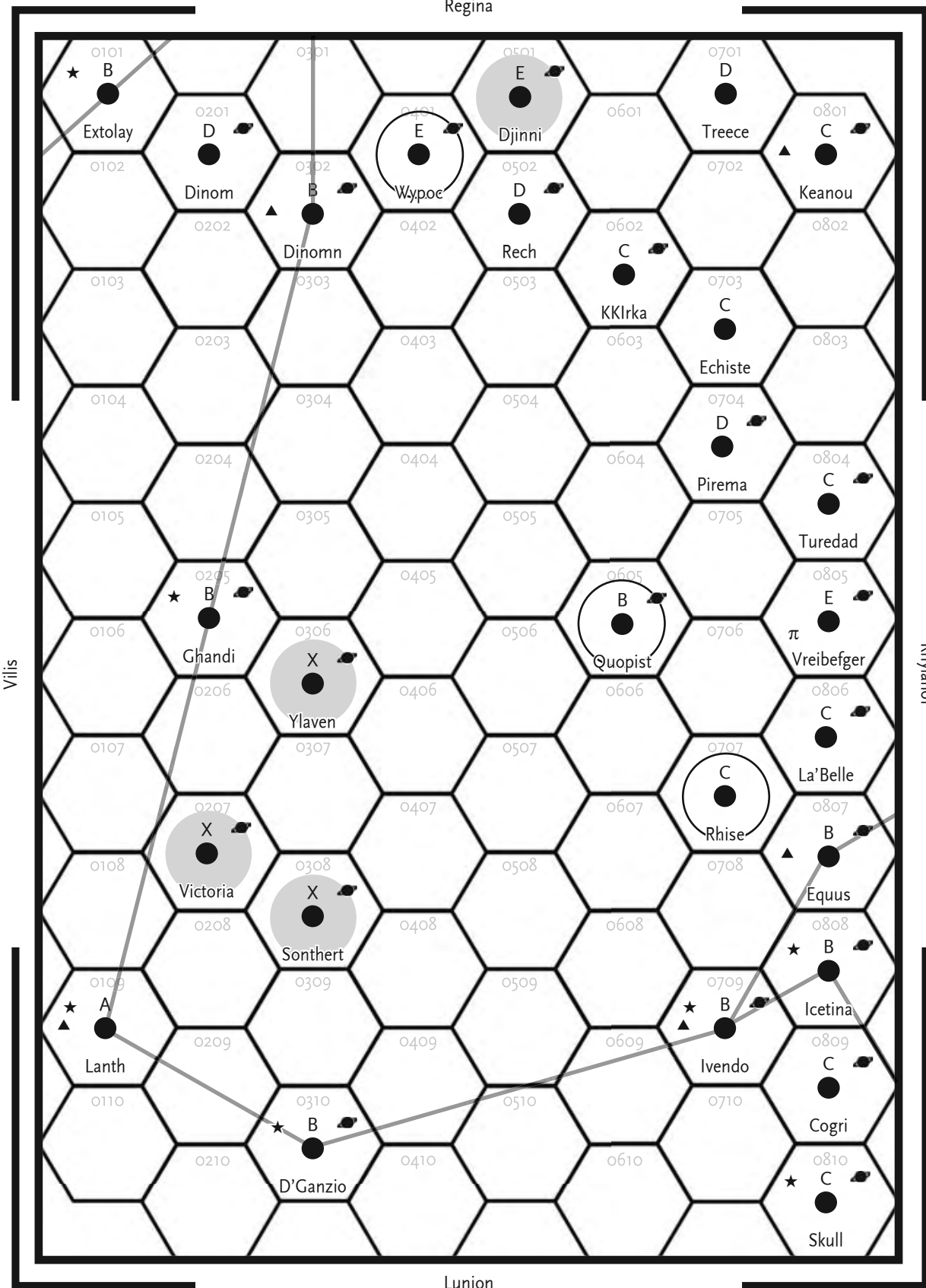
The best asteroids for planetary bombardment are rocky or, better, nickel-iron cored ones. Thus significant deposits of metal are probably available at the centre of each crater. However, most of these craters are now submerged and all lie below the taint level, making access by the locals extremely difficult. Some craters have a central raised point (a common feature of impact craters) and this could be both found and mined more easily. However the great distances involved mean that such an expedition is far beyond the means of the unaided local population.

It is possible to obtain a permit to visit Victoria, though not by any means easy. Such a permit includes strict clauses about trading metal or metal goods to the locals, and specifically prohibits access to Victoria's moon, Albert. Permits make it perfectly clear that permission to visit the moon has not been granted and that lethal force may be used without warning against any vessel approaching. No reason has ever been given.

Albert is large enough to have an atmosphere and appears to even have some surface water. It is officially listed as uninhabited but there have been reports of a stone-built (or, more fancifully, 'crystalline') city on the surface. Official charts make no mention of this, nor of any colonisation effort or history of habitation on Albert. Official sources will not even discuss the matter, and suggest that chasing wild tales is not a very useful way to spend one's time.

### Lanth Subsector

Name		Statistics	Remarks
Extolay	0101	B45589A-A	N I
Lanth	0109	A879533-B	2 I NI Capital
Dinom	0201	D100535-A	I NI G
Ghandi	0205	B211455-A	N I NI G
Victoria	0207	X697772-2	I Ag Ga Lt R G
Dinomn	0302	B674632-9	S I Ag Ga NI G
Ylaven	0306	X587552-4	I Ag Ga NI Lt R G
Sonthert	0308	X6266AB-3	I NI Lt R G
D'Ganzio	0310	B120410-D	N I Ht Po NI G
Wypoc	0401	E9C4547-8	I Fl NI A G
Djinni	0501	E459000-0	I Ba NI R G
Rech	0502	D9957AA-6	I Ag Ga G
KKirka	0602	CAA5345-8	I Fl Lo NI G
Quopist	0605	B150679-A	I Po NI A G
Treece	0701	D232866-8	I Po NA
Echiste	0703	C53A313-A	I Lo NI Wa
Pirema	0704	D691142-5	I Lo NI Lt G
Rhise	0707	C100576-A	I NI A
Ivendo	0709	B324659-A	2 I NI G
Keanou	0801	C792348-7	S I De Lo G
Turedad	0804	C465540-9	I Ag NI G
Vreibefger	0805	E481542-3	I Lt IRS G
La'Belle	0806	C564112-4	I Lo NI Lt G
Equus	0807	B55A858-B	S I Wa G
Icetina	0808	B5245A9-7	N I NI G
Cogri	0809	CA6A643-9	I Ri Wa G
Skull	0810	C2237C7-9	N I Po NA G





# RHYLANOR SUBSECTOR

Lying close to Mora subsector, the longest-developed part of the Marches, and to the established industries of Deneb sector, Rhylanor subsector is a prosperous area which sees a considerable amount of commercial traffic. One reason for this is that every world in the subsector is on the Spinward Main or accessible from it using a Jump-2 vessel. Indeed, a J2 ship can start out at Belizo and make a circuit through Mora, Lunion and Lanth subsectors all the way through to Celepina before crossing back to Belizo via Jae Tellona.

Rhylanor has a long naval connection. The world of that name was the birthplace of Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell, victor of the First Frontier War and instigator of the Civil War. Unusually, the Spinward Marches does not have system named Depot like most sectors. Macene is the largest and most important naval base in the sector and may eventually be expanded to a full Imperial Navy depot. At that time the name may or may not be changed.

The subsector is defended by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Fleet based out of Rhylanor, Jae Tellona, Macene, Margesi and Nutema naval bases and there are heavy elements of the Sector Fleet including several BatRons and CruRons held in reserve at Macene to back up a threatened subsector.

Rhylanor subsector has a number of corporate bases, notably at Rhylanor itself. These include shipyards and manufacturing centres as well as research installations. The Imperium maintains a research station (designated Gamma) at Vanejen, located in a remote area of the planet.

There are three Red Zones: Gerome, Huderu and 457-973. Conspiracy theorists keep trying to link the latter with the research station at Vanejen, but this seems unlikely as the Imperium would place its station at a location actually within the interdicted system if there were something there needing to be studied.

Kegenia is currently Amber Zoned. This low-tech world recently suffered a major social upheaval and governmental collapse. A temporary administration is now in place courtesy of the Colonial Office and backed up by the Army, but the situation remains volatile and caution is advised.

The atmosphere of Pannet makes it hazardous to visit but contains a number of useful compounds which are extracted for use by heavy industry. Several companies are offering very good wages for hostile-environment qualified personnel to work in the extraction process.

The belt at Gitosy is unusual in that it is spherical, the orbits of the asteroids that make up the belt are not confined to the ecliptic but proceed at all angles. However, most of these wayward asteroids are ice fragments; potentially habitable rocky asteroids are mainly found in the ecliptic plane or in only slightly eccentric orbits.

## **RHYLANOR A434934 F 2**

Rhylanor is a smallish world with a very thin atmosphere located in a cluster of three star systems just off the Spinward Main. As such it provides a useful short cut for high-Jump vessels and Xboats but is somewhat inaccessible to commercial ships, which tend to be capable of Jump-1 or Jump-2 at most.

The majority of traffic into Rhylanor comes via the Celepina-Jae Tellona link or from Fulacin to Porozlo. Access to the subsector capital was one reason for the construction of an excellent A-class starport at the otherwise rather unimportant world of Fulacin.

Rhylanor is home to several billion people, mostly humans, and has a fairly moderate society with liberal laws. Entry to the world's ruling elite by those not born to the right families is not easy but it is possible to join the ruling class by a variety of methods. The commonest routes are power and achievement.

Elevation for possession of power is simply a recognition of the influence an individual already wields. Usually this means business interests, ownership of industrial assets and the like but in some cases individuals who have risen to lead (legal) political or social groups have been elevated to the ruling class. There are those that suggest that rising political stars who might challenge the establishment are encouraged to sell out and join the existing system; others maintain that Rhylanor is a meritocracy where those who deserve a say in government are given it.

Elevation for achievement is generally linked with service to the Imperium or to Rhylanor's armed forces. Retired naval, marine and army officers are frequently offered generous inducements to take up government posts or simply to be associated with the government as advisors and public supporters. Achievements in other areas such as science or entertainment are also rewarded in this way, ensuring that Rhylanor attracts the best and brightest, and that when they come to live there, they join the establishment and thereby strengthen it.

Rhylanor's most famous citizen was Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell, who not only defeated the Outworld Coalition in the First Frontier War but then advanced on Capital and took the throne for himself. This is sometimes described as the ultimate expression of Rhylanor-style meritocracy. Plankwell had achieved great things as a naval officer and he wielded great power, fulfilling both the requirements for elevation. He thus deserved to be made part of the ruling elite, perhaps as Archduke of the Domain of Deneb. Empress Jacqueline was foolish not to reward Plankwell's greatness, and paid the price when he took what he deserved by his own efforts. Reminders that Plankwell did not manage to keep his position very long do not go down well on Rhylanor.



Admiral Plankwell's birthplace is today a small museum which attracts large numbers of visitors every year. This is only one of Rhylanor's many naval connections. Although Macene is home to those heavy units of the Sector Fleet that are based in the subsector, the subsector fleet has its headquarters at Rhylanor, and there is a very powerful system squadron. Rhylanor also boasts a large naval academy where young officers-to-be undergo their education and training.

One of the proud traditions of the Rhylanor Naval Academy is the 'manning the boats' ceremony held just before the graduation of each class of cadets. This commemorates the contribution of trainee personnel from the academy to the defence of Rhylanor in the Third Frontier War. Cadets volunteered in huge numbers to crew repaired and reactivated system defence boats from the system's reserve fleet during the Siege of Rhylanor. Casualties were very high in the dark months of the middle of 981 before the siege was finally broken. The ceremony is held in memory of their sacrifice and as a reminder to cadets that they have not chosen a cosy, safe occupation.

Rhylanor also has a large Scout base, which acts as a communications depot for the Xboat routes as well as a regional planning and command centre. The facility is quite extensive and contains training facilities for some of the more specialised scout roles such as the use of advanced communications equipment and the Scout Service security teams that are occasionally called upon to rescue personnel who have found more trouble than they can handle.

Rhylanor, with its large population base and extremely high technology level, is also a centre for industry, commerce and education. The Rhylanor Institute of Technology is one of the most prominent hard-science and technological-research institutions in the entire Imperium and is almost certainly the foremost such facility this side of Corridor sector.

Several Megacorporations have their regional headquarters on Rhylanor, or at least a major installation for those that prefer to work out of Mora. Some of Rhylanor's extensive shipyards are privately owned but most are either Megacorporate subsidiaries or at least partially funded by Megacorp money.

Rhylanor's importance as a communications hub and industrial centre cannot offset the fact that it is difficult to get to. Free Traders and similar independent starships are rarely seen in the ports of Rhylanor, Porozlo and Jae Tellona; they tend to stay on the Spinward Main for the most part. The vessels that do come through are for the most part expensive Jump-3 liners and freighters running through Eqqus, Celepina and Belizo.

Many of the ships on this route are Megacorporate-owned, though a couple of smaller lines make a decent profit from dedicated vessels plying the trans-Rhylanor routes. The most prominent, Rhylanor Shipping LIC, is heavily subsidised by the government of Rhylanor to ensure a regular service. The firm does not operate anywhere else, but Imperium Mail LIC does. The latter specialises in high-

jump courier and subsidised trade route operations in various parts of the Marches as well as Deneb sector.

## **VANEJEN C686854 5**

Vanejen is a moderate-sized planet with a dense atmosphere and about 60% water coverage. Average temperatures are low, and about a third of the oceans are frozen or covered by ice caps.

Although somewhat sub-optimal as a place to live, Vanejen can easily support humans. It was settled around -2400 by Vilani colonists, but became isolated during the Long Night, falling back to barbarism before climbing back up to a modest technological base. By the time the Imperium arrived in the Marches Vanejen had experienced centuries of cultural drift and had lost most traditional Vilani habits in favour of a home-grown culture. The population were initially pureblood Vilani and there has been little intermingling over the centuries.

Vanejen lies on the Spinward Main, though a less-travelled spur of it running Coreward from Mora subsector. This arm offers Jump-2 access to Jae Tellona and thereby to Rhylanor or another arm of the Main to Coreward, but is otherwise fairly unimportant to interstellar trade and political affairs.

This region has been a backwater for centuries and has never received much in the way of investment. It might have remained entirely underdeveloped but for the events of the Third Frontier War, which required the Imperial Navy to create a temporary base on Vanejen and brought interstellar affairs onto the locals' doorstep.

Prior to this Vanejen was a more or less forgotten colony world, whose inhabitants managed to create a stable tech level 2 society. Progress beyond that point never really happened. Vanejen fell off the map and escaped much in the way of notice for centuries. Indeed, most locals more or less forgot about other worlds. Only those that interacted with starfarers aboard the few ships that came through were reminded that there was a wide universe out there.

After the war, the Navy kept the base open for a time even though it was no longer needed. Budget constraints resulted in its closure after a few years, but by that time things had changed considerably as a result of offworld influences.

When the Navy came to Vanejen they did so carefully, making a number of deals with local leaders. In return for making the setup of the base easy, the ruling elite were given orbital surveys of mineral deposits and technological assistance in setting up an industrial base to exploit them.

In the century since the war, Vanejen has advanced steadily to tech level 5, with most sectors of industry a monopoly for one of the ruling families. Literally all steel production is owned by one family, all land transport by another, and so forth. Some sectors, for example sea transport, are divided between several families.





Today, Vanejen has a population of just over 540 million, scattered across three of the world's four continents. The fourth is barren and more or less uninhabited. Government is by a stable semi-feudal system based on control of critical industries. The ruling families were firmly entrenched in power even before they gained their monopoly on industrial activity.

Local travel is by rail for the most part, but sea travel is commonly used for commercial purposes. In the northern hemisphere and equatorial regions surface ships are the norm but submersibles are used for most purposes in the southern oceans and other, particularly stormy or ice-prone areas. Submersibles run on the surface most of the time, submerging to avoid ice or to ride out a storm.

The submersibles of Vanejen range from small personal transports to large cargo vessels and run on a diesel-electric system that can use a schnorkel to pull in air while remaining submerged. An explosives-rigged buoy is carried to allow a hole to the surface to be blasted in pack ice, allowing a boat to halt, recharge its batteries, and then proceed on a long under-ice transit.

These are not military boats, and are unarmed. They generally have a large glassed-in area forward, with powerful searchlights mounted alongside. This allows visually-guided manoeuvring at close range although it does pose a hazard in the event of a collision. Most boats are capable of operating at a safe maximum depth of about 200 metres, and can survive at somewhat greater depths.

Vanejen also has a substantial population of Chirpers. Most seem to live on the northern continent, even though it is less hospitable than the other land masses. This may be because the Chirpers have moved away from humans, although that begs the question of how they crossed the seas to their new home. There are populations of Chirpers on the other continents.

Chirpers are small bird-like humanoids with vestigial wings and a reptilian tail. They tend to mass about 25kg and are omnivorous. Chirpers are semi-intelligent and are capable of learning a few simple Galanglic phrases, though they mangle pronunciation horribly. Among themselves they communicate with bird-like chirps, hence their human name.

Chirpers tend to dwell in family groups of hunter-gatherers on the human-dominated continents, though there have been sightings of Chirper villages, which are primitive but show signs of agricultural and tool-fabrication skills. These villages are mainly located on the northern continent where few humans go.

Chirpers are a nuisance, often sneaking into settlements to steal food and shiny objects, which they seem to like. They are not wantonly destructive but can cause a fair amount of damage in their ingenious attempts to obtain something they want. To be fair, this is usually food and may be motivated by necessity rather than mischief, but it is a problem for the locals.

Chirpers are also shy and extremely adept at hiding from humans. Whole groups are able to vanish into the undergrowth when approached, though they can be shot at a distance. It may be that Chirpers do not understand that a human, say, 500m away can be a threat. They do tend to move away from humans and conceal themselves as soon as they become aware that people are nearby, but the incredible vanishing trick is not performed until intruders approach within a few hundred metres.

The human population on Vanejen has occasionally mounted expeditions to drive the Chirpers away from human settlements, and this has been generally successful. Perhaps not coincidentally, Chirper numbers seem to be falling.

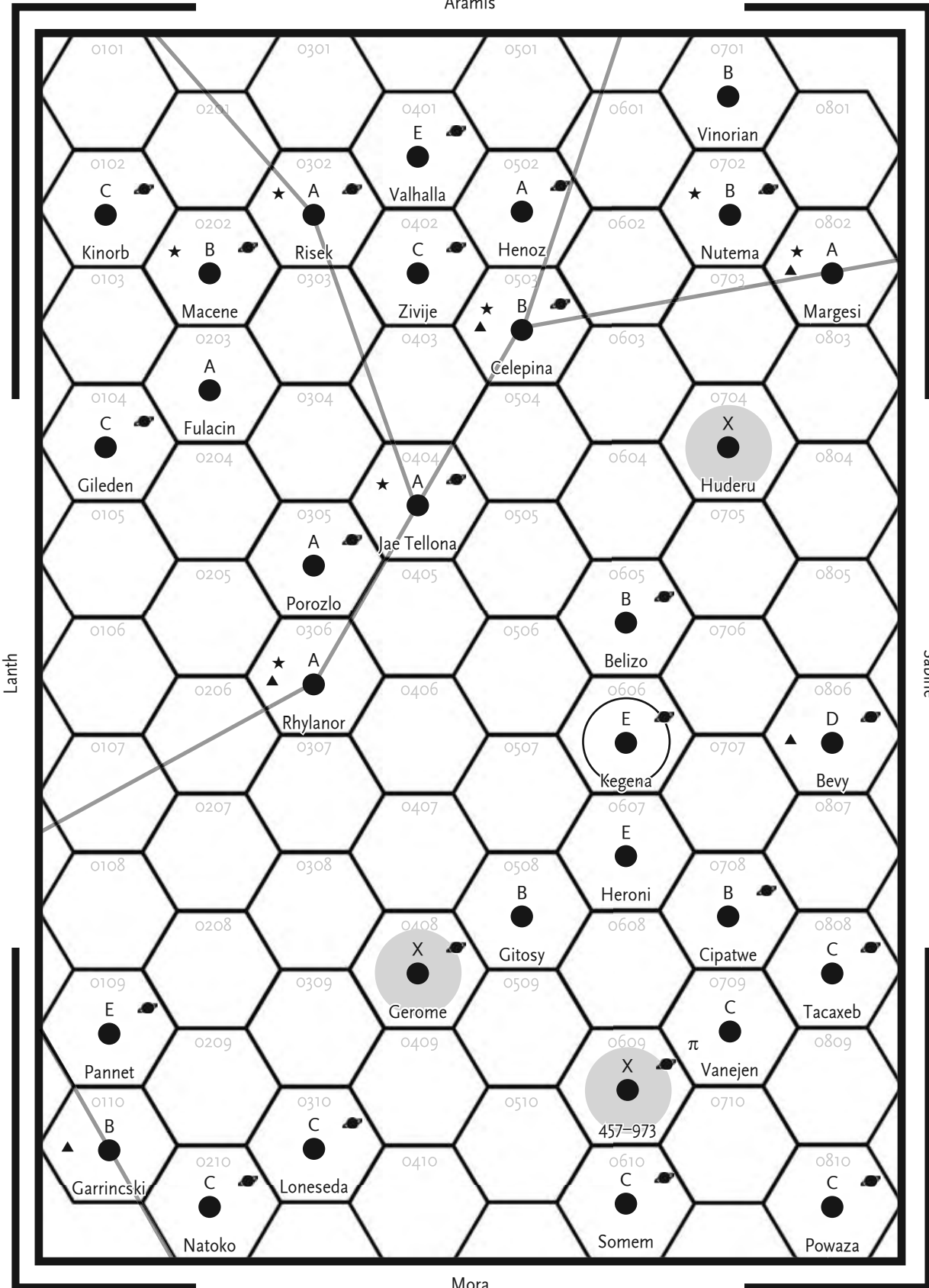
Vanejen is listed as the location of Imperial Research Station Gamma. As usual for such installations, it is located in a remote area. RS Gamma is reported to be a tower-like structure built on the seabed in the far south, projecting up above sea level. It is accessed by grav craft and supply submarines from local contractors. As with all such stations, the station is a local Red Zone; access without a permit is strictly prohibited. It is not known how this is enforced, nor what sort of research goes on inside.

### Rhylanor Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Kinorb	0102 C449433-9	NI G
Gileden	0104 C483103-6	Lo NI G
Pannet	0109 E9C5677-7	Fl NI G
Garrincski	0110 B632520-7 S	Po NI
Macene	0202 B000453-E N	Ht NI As G
Fulacin	0203 A674210-D	Ht Lo NI
Natoko	0210 C8879AB-9	Hi G
Risek	0302 A325579-A N	NI G
Porozlo	0305 A867A74-B	Hi G
Rhylanor	0306 A434934-F 2	Hi Ht Cap
Loneseda	0310 C86A215-7	Lo NI Wa G
Valhalla	0401 E365432-5	NI Lt G
Zivije	0402 C6B199C-B	Fl Hi G
Jae Tallona	0404 A560565-8 N	NI De G
Gerome	0408 X573000-0	Ba NI R G
Henoz	0502 A245543-B	Ag NI G
Celepina	0503 B434456-9 2	NI G
Gitosy	0508 B000676-9	As
Belizo	0605 B895646-5	Ag Ga Lt G
Kegeni	0606 E869569-3	NI Lt A G
Heroni	0607 E7A0614-3	NI De Lt
457-973	0609 X372215-4	Lo NI Lt R G
Somem	0610 C301340-B	Lo NI G
Vinorian	0701 B879610-9	NI
Nutema	0702 B864310-8 N	Lo NI G
Huderu	0704 X575000-0	Ba NI R
Cipatwe	0708 B35879A-6	Ag G
Vanejen	0709 C686854-5	Ri Lt IRS
Margesi	0802 A576257-C 2	Ht Lo NI
Bevy	0806 D4209CC-A S	Hi Po NA In G
Tacaxeb	0808 C230411-B	Po NI De G
Powaza	0810 C787566-5	Ag Ga NI Lt G



Aramis



Lanth

Sabine

Mora



# DARRIAN SUBSECTOR

Darrian subsector lies entirely beyond Imperial space. Access requires either passage through the Sword Worlds Confederation (not always possible) or a transit around via an arm of the Spinward Main and into Darrian subsector from Vilis–Querion or District 268–Five Sisters.

The subsector itself is dominated by a fifteen–world cluster centring on Ilium and Mire. This was the original area into which the Darrians expanded when they first discovered interstellar travel. Although many of these worlds were cut off for a long period during the aftermath of the Maghiz, they remained culturally Darrian and were peaceably re–integrated into the Darrian Confederation.

Technically this cluster lies on the Spinward Main but since access to the rest of the Main requires transiting through the ‘Gram Arm’ of the Sword Worlds, astrographical convenience is overruled by local politics. Uniqua and Garoo are also on the Spinward Main, though they lie at the extreme outer end, where the Main passes out of the Marches and into Foreven sector to Spinward. The remainder of the subsector is less dense, with stars occurring in small groups for the most part.

While Darrian is the original home of the Darrian people, it was thoroughly devastated by the solar flares of the Maghiz and never regained its position. Pre–Maghiz structures and artefacts attract many visitors each year as they are of a higher tech level than is encountered in the Imperium or the Consulate. There are strict prohibitions on exporting pre–Maghiz items.

Mire is the modern capital of the Confederation. Curiously, all settlements are underground in order to preserve the surface for parks, nature reserves and agriculture. The Darrian people love and are respectful of life, though without taking this to extremes. As a result the surface of Mire is a wondrously unspoiled environment. So is Rorre, for similar reasons. Rorre was settled by a Darrian group that disliked technology and preferred a rustic lifestyle. It was untouched by the Maghiz; life on Rorre continues more or less as it always has.

Torment is a prison world, used by the Darrians as a place to dispose of criminals that even the tolerant Darrian society cannot accept. Access is prohibited in much the same manner of an Imperial Red Zone. Prisoners mine raw materials in return for necessary supplies.

The world of Ilium was terraformed by the Darrians before the Maghiz and retains a slight atmospheric taint despite the best of efforts to remove it. Another tainted–atmosphere world is 494–908, which defied the efforts of Darrian terraformers and is instead used as a military training area, including orbital bombardment. Spume also has a tainted atmosphere; this is compounded by the fact that the taint is radioactive as a result of natural volcanism. The population live in a sealed mining settlement.

## DARRIAN A463955 G

Darrian is a smallish world with a standard atmosphere. Although a little dry, it is entirely habitable by humans and was chosen by the mysterious Ancients as the home for a transplanted population. Why these people were moved to Darrian will probably never be known; the Ancients disappeared soon afterwards and the Darrians were left alone to develop on their new world.

According to Darrian legends and archaeological research, the Darrians lived in a world of gardens approximating the Terran Eden. It would seem that the Ancients set up an environment for the population that met all their needs and allowed their numbers to grow rapidly without much need for conflict over resources.

Eventually whatever Ancient devices ran the gardens ran down and they began to fail, though this appears to have been a gradual process. The Darrians were forced to spread out across their planet and to fend for themselves. Fortunately Darrian was a very welcoming world, and the transition was not especially traumatic.

Perhaps as a result of their relatively comfortable environment, the Darrians developed a great respect for life and their science was channelled into coexistence with the environment rather than fighting it for survival. Science and technology progressed slowly as there was little need for rapid progress, though the Darrians developed their intellectual gifts in abstract areas like mathematics and philosophy.

Over the centuries, the Darrians adapted to their homeworld, gradually acquiring a distinctive appearance. Although recognisably human and capable of interbreeding with other humans, the Darrians developed what some refer to as an ‘elfin’ appearance. They are tall and slender as a result of the lower gravity on their homeworld, and tend to be more dextrous, if a little weaker, than mainstream humans. Their skin has a golden colour and hair is white or silver–grey as a result of living under a different sun for millennia.

By –1511, the Darrians had developed a peaceful, rational society but one without much in the way of technology. At that point, everything changed with the arrival of refugees from Earth. These came aboard a fleet of ships built by the Itzin Corporation, out of Turkey on Old Earth itself. They were fleeing the decline that would lead to the Long Night, and made an epic voyage all the way to Deneb sector before turning Spinward and entering the Marches. After surveying Sacnoth, the Itzin fleet chose Darrian as its final destination.

Whatever the new arrivals did next, Darrian and its people were going to be changed forever. However, to the great good fortune of the Darrian people the newcomers did not take the obvious ‘sky



gods' route, nor did they use their superior technology to dominate or marginalise the Darrians. Instead they made a careful and friendly approach, trading fairly with their new friends who in turn welcomed the Terrans into Darrian society.

Change was inevitable, but the Darrian people were part of it rather than it being forced upon them. Within a century the two cultures had melded into one, as had the populations. The thoughtful, inquisitive nature of the Darrians complemented the energetic and at times reckless nature of the newcomers. Working with the technological base the Terrans had brought with them, the new Darrian society began a period of explosive technological growth and reached TL16 within just 400 years.

Curiosity very nearly killed the metaphorical cat when an experiment on Darrian's sun Tarnis resulted in the Maghiz, or Chaos. Darrian itself was badly burned by the resulting explosion of star-hot gases, and has never completely recovered. Most of the population died in the solar flares or soon afterward, and the remainder were too busy trying to survive to preserve much in the way of technology. The Darrian return to space began in -275, but on the nearby world of Mire rather than Darrian itself.

Today, Darrian still bears the scars of the Maghiz. There are extensive ruins of former TL 16 cites. These attract tourists and visitors with a scientific interest from quite far afield, as do the remains of what are now normally called 'orchards'; the Ancients-built gardens that were home to the original Darrian civilisation. Trade in artefacts from these sites is very strictly controlled.

Modern Darrian has a population numbering in the billions. Most of these people live on the surface, contrary to popular images of Darrian as a world of flying cities. The surface is divided more by mountain ranges than by seas, creating five great 'basins' which are the equivalent of continents. In addition there are four flying cities, held aloft by gravitic technology. Each has its own unique characteristics and function, but altogether they contain only a fraction of the world population.

In addition to being the spiritual home of the Darrian Confederation, Darrian is also the main technological centre. The IISS has assigned a tech level rating of G (16), but this is slightly misleading. TL 16 artefacts are under study and in some cases can be duplicated and incorporated into devices as black-box components, but the world as a whole does not make use of TL 16 items on a routine basis. Most of the ultra-high technology available on planet is in the form of pre-Maghiz artefacts which are too precious for their scientific value to be used for practical tasks.

Study of the pre-Maghiz items, coupled with the Darrians' natural aptitude for technology, will undoubtedly result in technological growth to surpass that of the Imperium and perhaps even the pre-Maghiz Darrians. However, even though the government of Darrian is composed largely of scientists, restrictions are in place and any potentially hazardous experimentation is very carefully considered

before being implemented. The Darrian government is famous for its detailed analysis of the impact of almost every decision on the world itself and on the Darrian people.

## **DORANNIA E42158A 8**

Dorannia is one of a cluster of three worlds lying just off the Bowman Arm of the Spinward Main and accessible by Jump-2 ships from the Main or the central cluster of the subsector. None of these worlds is especially important, though Bularia has a reasonable trade in agricultural produce.

Dorannia is an independent world with a population numbering somewhat less than a million. It is administered by a fairly efficient civil service government which follows established patterns in an unimaginative way. Laws are strict, largely as a consequence of a harsh environment that can kill the unwary or careless worker. Mistakes can have terminal consequences for others, too.

The planet is smallish, with a fairly low surface gravity and a very thin atmosphere which is tainted by radioactive dust. This requires a compressor mask or a full air supply when working outside the settlements and strict decontamination procedures at the settlements. These tend not to be very large, with towns of a few thousand being more common than large cities. The towns are each administered by a local government, which in turn answers to the central administration at the capital.

Dorannia has very little water and virtually no food production outside the colony domes. Most towns have an area dedicated to food production, which also helps keep the air fresh, but few are self-sufficient. Extra foodstuffs are brought in from the more specialised settlements which grow bulk crops in huge environmentally-sealed greenhouses.

Transport between the settlements is generally by rail or large, slow transport crawlers. Grav vehicles are expensive and Dorannia is not a rich world, so the few grav vehicles available tend to be in the hands of the government or well-off private owners rather than in use as commercial transport.

Dorannia has very little agriculture, with a paltry amount of air and water, but what it does have is fissionables. The world was originally settled as a mining colony to extract and process radioactive ores, and this is the mainstay of its offworld business. However, the remote location of the world makes it a poor choice as a supplier for most Imperial businesses. The mines make a fairly modest profit but never enough to really put Dorannia on the economic map.

In recent years, a new industry has emerged on Dorannia. Rather than simply mining and exporting radioactives, the world's industrial base now constructs a range of fission-based power systems. These include full-sized nuclear powerplants suitable to power a large town or major industrial complex as well as smaller plants for vehicles and miniature reactors for small-scale applications.



Nuclear fission is a mature technology on Dorannia, which uses fission reactors to power its towns, industrial centres, railways and even some of the larger transport crawlers. Safety records and reliability are good, although fission power will never be as safe as fusion, nor can fission match the output per unit mass of a fusion plant. Nevertheless it is a viable alternative for mid-tech worlds that want a power system that can be maintained with local resources. Thus far Dorannia's products have found a few buyers and the future seems promising. A recent ad campaign run on several worlds invited prospective buyers to visit 'Atomic Dorannia' and showcased a range of quite novel nuclear energy applications.

All is not entirely well on Dorannia, however. The scattered nature of the world's settlements makes them ideal targets for planetary raiders. These are groups of spaceborne thugs that either raid settlements for whatever they can grab or else hold them hostage under the guns of their ship, demanding tribute in return for not shooting the place up. On a sealed-environment world like Dorannia the consequences of taking fire in this manner could be catastrophic.

After a string of raids on different settlements in 1102-3, one of which wrecked a starport that was not very good to begin with, the government decided to do something about the problem. A Starmerc unit comprising an armed merchant ship and associated personnel was hired for a time, providing a measure of protection in the short term and advising on the creation of planetary defences on a more permanent basis.

The latter took a form that would simply not be allowed in the Imperium. Batteries of crude nuclear missiles were installed near many of the settlements, guided by rather basic tracking and fire control equipment. These homebuilt missiles are not up to the safety standards required in the Imperium.

Although the Imperium does permit nuclear munitions to be owned by world governments for planetary defence in the case of major wars, there are many volumes of regulations for their safe storage and the circumstances under which they can be used. Normal ship-to-ship missiles, even aboard warships, are non-nuclear. Dorannia, on the other hand, has launched more nuclear munitions under combat conditions since 1103 than most planetary navies in their entire history. The fact of the matter is that 'Atomic Dorannia' has become trigger-happy with its new arsenal.

Since Dorannia has no real capability to conduct a boarding and search in space, the only option is to use the threat of annihilation. Vessels that seem even slightly suspect are targeted and told that they have numerous missiles aimed at them. They are permitted to sheer off and go somewhere else or else proceed in to land at the port very slowly and carefully.

There was originally a flaw in this strategy, in that Dorannia did not possess the means to destroy a starship without resorting to

nuclear missiles, so once the ship came in close enough it could not be attacked. However, that was not common knowledge and in recent months a stock of short-range non-nuclear missiles has been obtained.

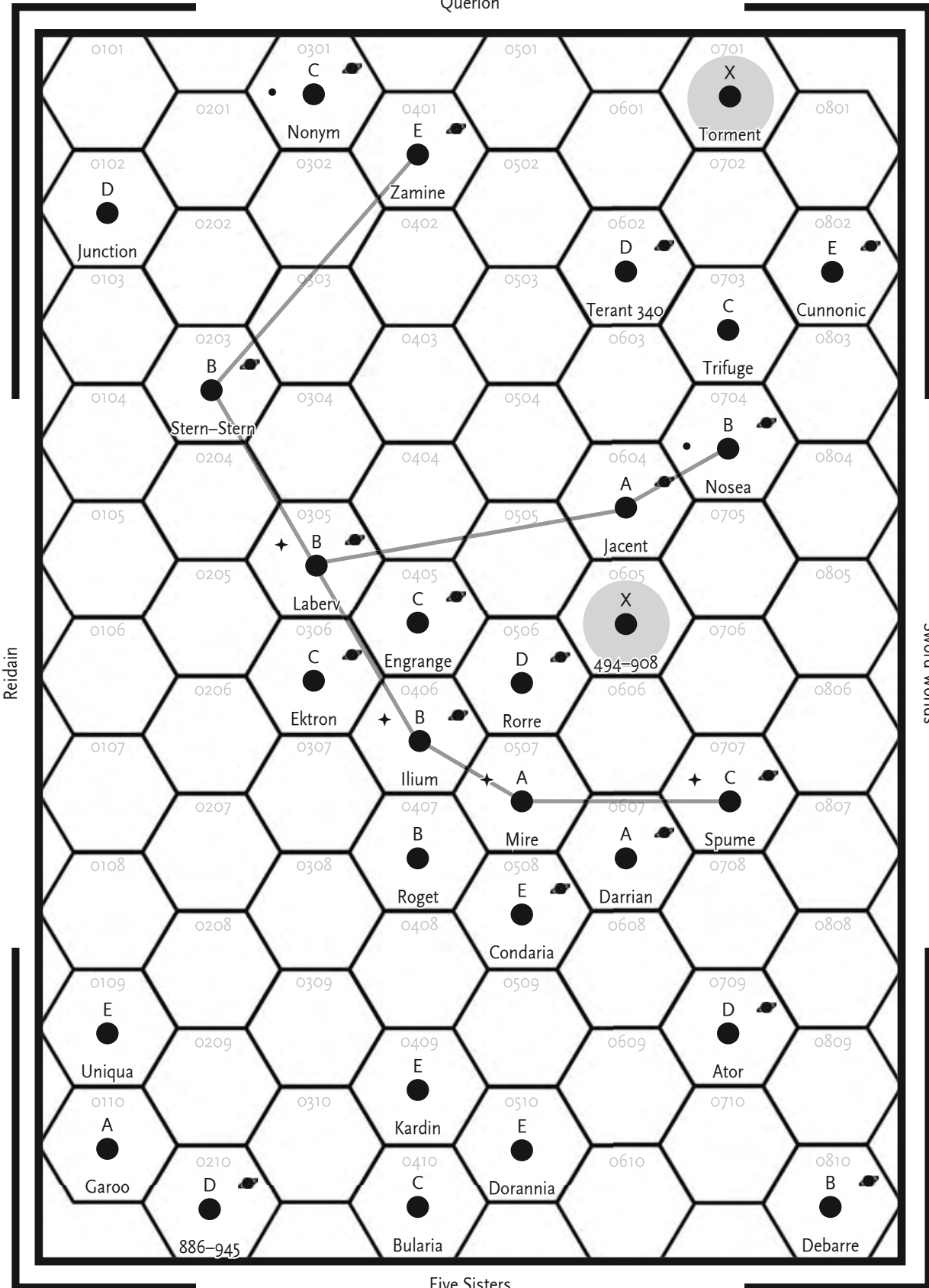
Several vessels have been fired upon, and as the guidance systems of Dorannia's missile arsenal are not the best, accuracy is problematical. The answer is, of course, to fire large salvos in the hope of a hit. As a result a typical Dorannia PAD (Planetary Aerospace Defence) missile consists of a large ground-to-orbit bus section and six independently targeted short-range missiles, each with a tactical nuclear warhead.

A number of vessels have been induced to flee in the face of this crazily aggressive response, and at least one has been hit. It is not possible to tell from an expanding cloud of radioactive debris and gas whether the target actually was a raider or simply a merchant vessel whose bad-tempered captain chose the wrong frontier world to get stropky with traffic control. In any case, word seems to have got round. The raids have stopped.

### **Darrian Subsector**

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Junction	0102 D150441-4	Po NI De Lt
Uniqua	0109 E62556B-4	NI Lt
Garoo	0110 A2008CB-A	NA
Stern-Stern	0203 B321588-B	D Po NI
886-945	0210 D800000-0	Ba
Nonym	0301 C233898-A	M Po NA
Laberv	0305 B354443-7	D D NI
Ektron	0306 C332652-9	D Po NA NI
Zamine	0401 E897977-A	D Hi In
Engrange	0405 C554769-8	D Ag Ga
Ilium	0406 B444831-9	D D
Roget	0407 B566777-9	D Ri Ag
Kardin	0409 E453123-6	Lo Po NI
Bularia	0410 C774622-5	Ag Ga Lt
Rorre	0506 D765657-3	D Ri Ag Ga NI Lt
Mire	0507 A665A95-B	D D Hi Cap
Condaria	0508 E54779B-5	Ag Ga Lt
Dorannia	0510 E42158A-8	Po NI
Terant 340	0602 D1405A7-9	D Po NI De
Jacent	0604 A333644-D	D Ht Po NA NI
494-908	0605 X893000-0	D NI
Darrian	0607 A463955-G	D Hi Ht Po NA
Torment	0701 X233231-4	D Lo Po NI Lt
Trifuge	0703 C446556-9	D Ag NI
Nosea	0704 B2326BB-C	M Ht Po NA NI
Spume	0707 C140200-A	D D Lo Po NI De
Ator	0709 D326258-6	Lo NI
Cunnonic	0802 E65767A-3	D Ag Ga NI Lt
Dubarre	0810 B854123-9	Lo NI

Querion





# SWORD WORLDS SUBSECTOR

Every single world of Sword Worlds subsector lies on the Spinward Main, although getting to some without a Jump-2 capable ship requires following the meanders of the Main for some time. The Main diverges at Iron and again at Caliburn. Heading Spinward-Rimward from there is a section of the Main referred to as the Bowman Arm which runs across the Coreward ends of District 268 and Five Sisters subsector before wandering out of the sector at Garoo and Uniqua.

Rimward from Caliburn, the Main splits again in District 268, giving access to the Rimward end of Five Sisters subsector in one direction and Glisten in the other. Jump-2 ships can make a circuit back towards Trin and Mora by this route.

Spinward-Coreward from Iron is an arm of the Main that leads to Darrian subsector, but is not normally considered part of the Spinward Main except in purely astrographical terms. This is due to the political allegiance of the worlds on the Main.

The Sword Worlds Confederation, occupying a section of the Spinward Main and a couple of spurs from it, is a collection of like-minded world governments that sometimes work together rather than a monolithic political body. The present Confederation capital is at Gram, though exactly how much power is exerted from there can vary considerably depending on the political climate.

The Sword Worlds were settled by a long-range colony mission from Terra; the Imperium arrived much later. As a result there are deep cultural differences between the two groups. Similarly, the Darrians were recovering from the Maghiz when the Sword Worlders arrived and claimed the region for their own. They thus see themselves as rightful overlords of the region, and tend to deal with foreign (Darrian or Imperial) ships passing through in a high-handed and arrogant manner.

The four 'Metal Worlds' (Iron, Bronze, Mithril and Steel) are 'reserve worlds' held in trust by the Sword Worlds Confederation against future need. Until recently the Confederation has vigorously resisted Imperial efforts to exploit these worlds, but that attitude has recently changed. A theoretically joint project to develop Steel has been put forward. In practice the Sword Worlder involvement is half-hearted at best. Surveying is likely to begin soon, once the last political issues are resolved.

There are only four Imperial worlds in the subsector: Flammarion, Caladbolg, Gunn and Caliburn. Flammarion has a small Imperial Navy station and both Flammarion and Caladbolg have scout bases to serve the Xboat route through to Five Sisters subsector. There is also a small Scout base at Biter serving the same purpose. Biter is

part of the Sword Worlds Confederation and keeping the scout base in operation has at times required some careful negotiation.

Were Steel to be developed, it might be possible to run the Imperial Xboat system through there, enabling the Imperial Scout station at Biter to be closed down. This appears to have been a factor in permitting the Steel Project to go ahead.

Gunn is Amber Zoned due to the hazardous local conditions. As usual, all non-Imperial worlds should be considered Amber and the Sword Worlds, with their generally negative outlook on all things Imperial, particularly so. The fact that Joyeuse has been awarded an explicit Amber rating leads Imperial wags to describe the world as 'especially particularly Amber'. Imperial travellers are advised to avoid Joyeuse altogether.

## **GRAM A895957 B B**

Located on what is now known as the 'Gram Arm' of the Sword Worlds section of the Spinward Main, Gram is a moderate sized world with a dense, tainted atmosphere and about 50% coverage of seas. The world is remarkable in that this 50/50 coverage is almost perfect; there is one giant ocean and one supercontinent, though this does have a number of small inland seas here and there.

Gram was the first of the Sword Worlds to be settled. The world was sufficiently habitable to allow the colonists to establish a home and then spread out to what became the other Sword Worlds as their numbers grew. For this reason the people of Gram have always considered themselves the original and best Sword Worlders, and of course the rightful leaders of the Confederation.

Gram is at present the capital of the Confederation, though exactly how much that means varies from time to time. What passes for central government in the Confederation has collapsed entirely from time to time, and at other times the leadership has rested with other worlds.

Gram has held on to power in the Sword Worlds since 852, a remarkable achievement in such a turbulent political environment. Somewhat over a century ago the administrative apparatus of the Confederation was moved to a purpose-built city located on the far side of the planet from Gram's own capital.

Gram is a heavily populated and industrialised world whose aristocracy are mainly the owners of major industrial and commercial companies. Some are actually businessmen or captains of industry, others are simply the heads of families that own these businesses



and pay staff to run them. Thus most nobles are able to pursue other interests or a career in the military as well as their political duties.

The popular image of the typical Sword Worlder is one of a rugged freeholder with rifles over the fireplace, working his land in the daytime and swapping tall tales with his neighbours over strong drinks in the evening. On Gram this is very far from the truth. Most of the population live in large cities and work either in industry or the services that support a large population.

There are also many legal restrictions, in part made necessary by having such a large urban population. Thus Gram's billions are governed by a fairly high law level that prohibits private ownership of firearms. This would be unthinkable to the rugged frontiersman of Sword Worlder ideals, but it is a fact of life for the populace of Gram.

One of Gram's most important industries is shipbuilding, especially for the navies of the Confederation. Sword Worlder ships are of a lower technological level than those of the Imperium, and are not capable of high Jump numbers. Gram's yards turn out two basic types of warship.

Since it is possible to reach almost any point in the Sword Worlds along the Main, vessels whose intended for primarily defensive operations are normally only capable of Jump-1, allowing them to redeploy under their own power but not surrendering much space to fuel tanks and engine systems. Warships intended for offensive operations are built with higher Jump capabilities for greater strategic mobility.

What both types have in common is a generally blocky and extremely tough design, with multiple-redundant systems to allow them to soak up massive punishment without being forced to quit the battle. This suits Sword Worlder commanders, among whom an unwarranted retreat is considered grounds for disgrace and damage to their ship is a badge of honour. Indeed, it has been said that the ideal naval engagement from the point of view of a Sword Worlder captain is one where his ship is shot to ribbons and where at least one of his peers breaks off action with a less damaged ship.

Sword Worlder ground combat equipment is built along similar lines, and Gram is a major supplier to the rest of the Confederation. Combat vehicles are tough and well armed but lacking in sensors and electronic equipment.

Despite a certain amount of pride at being the capital of the Confederation, the first of the Sword Worlds and the source of much of the Confederation's military equipment, there is considerable disaffection among the workers of Gram. The cities are somewhat grim and there are few opportunities for personal advancement. Some of the mid-level aristocracy have begun to champion these disaffected groups. In some cases this is out of genuine concern,

others are doing it as a sort of placebo, knowing that nothing will really change, and some seem to be trying to use the workers as footsoldiers in their own political battles.

At present there have been relatively few serious incidents, but crime and violence are on the rise in the poorer sections of the cities and there have been a number of short strikes by workers. These are normally accompanied by loud protestations by the workers of their loyalty to Gram and the Sword Worlds, and as a rule are surprisingly good-natured as well as short.

In one factory, for example, the workers down tools late in the afternoon shift, once a week like clockwork. They then march outside where they make a statement to the news cameras that dutifully turn up and steadfastly refuse to return to work for the remainder of the day. The police usually send a patrol or two as a token presence but there is never any trouble. A representative of the management turns up sooner or later and explains yet again that the issue is being addressed but concessions are not at this time possible and the strikers promise to continue their protest until their grievances are dealt with. So long as neither side rocks the boat, this situation is accepted by both the workers and the owners as a necessary safety valve for disaffection that is both valid and unavoidable.

Not everyone is so good-natured, however. There have been all-but-revolutions in some plants, sabotage in others and even attempts on the lives of members of the aristocracy. Rioting has occurred in some cities, though for the most part this is rare. It seems likely that unless conditions for the typical Gram citizen improve then the situation will grow worse – and creating a better life for billions would be hugely expensive if it were possible at all.

## **MITHRIL**                      **E568000**                      **0**

Mithril is one of the four 'metal worlds' claimed by the Sword Worlds Confederation but not yet developed or colonised. The world is very suitable in most ways for colonisation – it has a standard atmosphere and about 80% ocean coverage. However, Mithril is more than a little cold.

Much of Mithril's ocean surface is either frozen or prone to drifting ice. The land is swept by harsh winds and often blanketed by ice and snow. While this would not pose too much of a problem to high-technology settlers, it does make agriculture something of a problem and raises the cost of setting up a viable colony.

Mithril lies on the Spinward Main and while vessels capable of Jump-2 or more tend to bypass the system some ships have to come through. Those that can usually skim fuel from a gas giant and move on without visiting the world. A patrol vessel from the Confederation navy is sometimes stationed in the system and may challenge vessels passing through but on the whole the Sword Worlders will not interfere with the navigational rights of passing vessels.





Vessels not equipped for fuel skimming must obtain their fuel from the planet. This is usually done by landing in a remote area and running hoses to a source of water or landing in water and simply drawing it into the tanks. The Sword Worlds Confederation does not greatly appreciate this practice but has never done anything about it.

Ships landing on the world to refuel are technically violating Sword Worlder sovereign territory, but so long as Imperial vessels just refuel and go the Sword Worlders are not sufficiently outraged to confront the Imperium over the matter, which might result from actions against Imperial-registered starships.

Relatively few ships land at the port. This is an 'E' class installation, which is to say little more than a marked landing area with beacons and a cluster of huts nearby. Outsiders are not welcome at the port. Fuel and resupply are not available for passing vessels, though Sword Worlder vessels coming through on official business are a different matter and Sword Worlds-registered merchant ships might be more warmly received.

Although the population of Mithril is officially rated as zero as there is no permanent population, a handful of Sword Worlders operate the tiny port. This is one of the loneliest jobs in Charted Space – to be stationed with just a couple of companions on a planet several weeks from any sort of assistance if disaster strikes.

This tiny presence serves to support the Confederation's claim to ownership of the world. It is necessary for political reasons but it is not a pleasant posting. Few of the personnel to be deployed to Mithril Starport have ever ventured far into the arctic wilderness surrounding the base. Apart from anything else there is no prospect for rescue if something goes wrong and the staff all have jobs to do at the port.

Exploration teams have surveyed the world of course, sometimes working out of the port. These report an unusual phenomenon known as the 'ephemeral glade'. Mithril is normally very cold and its ecosystem has developed to take maximum advantage of the short periods of above-zero temperatures that occur. During one of these very brief warm periods (warm by Mithril's standards means a degree or so above freezing), an ephemeral glade may spring up. This is essentially an area of plant life that grows from the thawing soil at incredible speed. Within a few hours an area of grass-like plants up to 2–3m high can spring up.

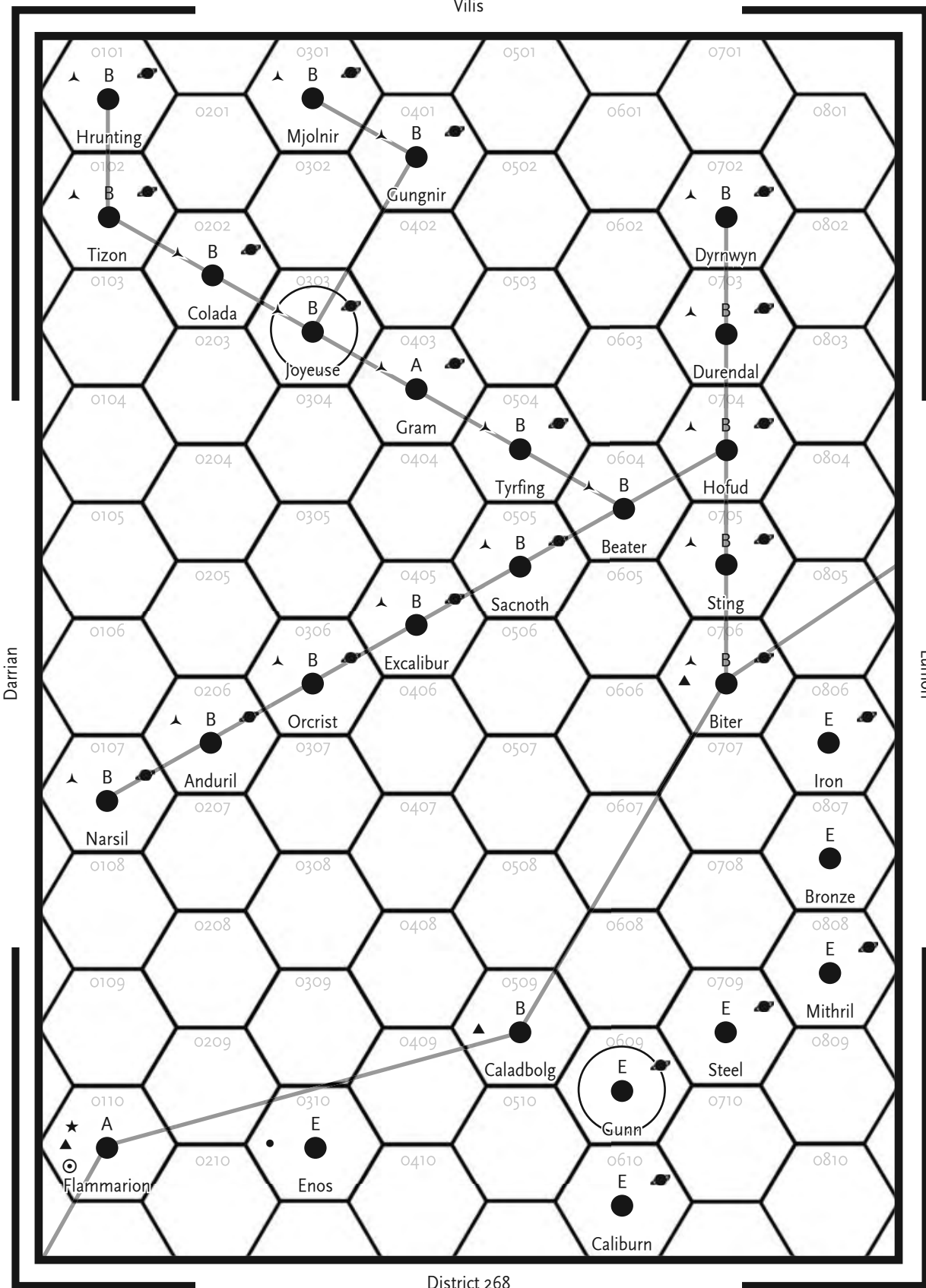
Glades tend to be 2–3 kilometres across and rapidly attract animals from the surrounding area, drawn to the readily available food and shelter of the glade. Once the temperature drops below freezing, the plants rapidly die and the animals depart after a last frenzy of feeding on the dying glade's bounty.

Among the animals attracted to a glade are Calamanders, scaly burrowing creatures with a complex society. Each group is centred on a female who bears young and seems to be the 'queen' of the group. She resides in a burrow which she rarely leaves and is attended by several drone males. A third gender, referred to as a Protector, digs tunnels, forages for food and, as the name suggests, fiercely protects the burrow. Protectors mass about 12kg and are quite tough. They are amphibious and prone to scavenge for food or shiny objects which they take back to the female, apparently as gifts or trophies.

Crystallice are another creature native to Mithril and are at best a nuisance. They are tiny insect-like creatures that, even close up, resemble ice crystals. They lie on the surface of snow or ice and attach themselves to passing creatures, chewing through clothing or hide to reach exposed skin. At this point they begin to bite and burrow their way into the dermis, causing extreme pain and often considerable bleeding. Crystallice infestation can be fatal and is best countered by picking the crystallice off before they can burrow under the skin.

### Sword Worlds Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Hrunting	0101 B463747-9 B S Ri	G
Tizon	0102 B386887-A B S Ri	G
Narsil	0107 B574A55-A B S Hi In	G
Flammarion	0110 A623514-B 2 Po NI IWS	
Colada	0202 B364685-B B S Ri Ag NI	G
Anduril	0206 B985855-B B S Ri	G
Mjolnir	0301 B530544-A B S Po NI De	G
Joyeuse	0303 B464778-A B S Ri Ag	A G
Orcrist	0306 B8A6733-A B S Fl	G
Enos	0310 E25059B-4 M S Po NI De Lt	
Gungnir	0401 B444779-8 B S Ag	G
Gram	0403 A895957-B B S Hi In Cap	G
Excalibur	0405 B324755-A B S	G
Tyrfing	0504 B637735-A B S	G
Sacnoth	0505 B775956-C B S Hi Ht In	G
Caladbolg	0509 B365776-A S Ri In	
Beater	0604 B685686-A B S Ri Ag NI	
Gunn	0609 E344110-8 Lo NI	A G
Caliburn	0610 E000514-A As	G
Dyrnwyn	0702 B958412-A B S NI	G
Durendal	0703 B687334-B B S Lo NI	G
Hofud	0704 B666553-A B S Ag Ga NI	G
Sting	0705 B645896-A B S	G
Biter	0706 B354623-A B S Ag NI	G
Steel	0709 E655000-0 S Ba	G
Iron	0806 E529000-0 S Ba	G
Bronze	0807 E201000-0 S Ba	
Mithril	0808 E568000-0 S Ba	G





# LUNION SUBSECTOR

With most of its worlds on the Spinward Main and in close proximity to Mora subsector, Lunion subsector was settled early in the Imperial expansion into the Marches and contains a number of fairly high-technology worlds. Most traffic bound for Five Sisters and Darrian subsectors goes through Lunion, contributing to the local economy.

Ling Standard Products (LSP) has major shipyards at Lunion and Strouden. Indeed these are the most important yards in the Marches in terms of output. They handle commercial and military contracts on a large scale as well as building standard designs and one-off vessels for private customers. Standards of workmanship are very high.

Not coincidentally, the main naval bases for the subsector are at Lunion and Strouden, with light patrol forces based out of Shirene and Capon. Subsector assets belong to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Fleet, which is mainly concerned with keeping its section of the Spinward Main safe for navigation. Long-term 'guardship' deployments are not uncommon even in systems with lesser starports. While boring for the crews involved, such deployments go a long way towards deterring both piracy and smuggling.

The sparse area in the Coreward end of the subsector is part of the Abyss Rift and has the same bad reputation for Misjumping ships and other strange phenomena. The remainder of the subsector is more normal. There is nothing particularly strange about the sparse area Rimward of the Wardn-Strouden line although it is quite extensive and runs into neighbouring subsectors.

The subsector's planetoid belts are something of an economic disappointment. Gandr is particularly poor, though the discovery of superheavy elements there in 1040 caused a number of firms to move in, only to pull out again when the deposits proved unviable. Zaibon once had the largest deposit of copper on record, but this has been played out and few new deposits are being found. As a result the system's mining-based economy is in decline.

Ianic has a sizable minority of Jonkeereen (about 30%) among its population. The Jonkeereen are humans genetically engineered to thrive in desert environments. They generally live apart from the world's normal humans but get along well enough with them.

Less harmonious is Quiru, where a recent coup using mercenary forces toppled the government and put a military junta in its place. As yet there has been no official Imperial response.

Gorram and Penkwhar are Red Zoned, while Shirene is an Amber Zone. Technically Wardn and Olympia are also Amber Zones as they are not Imperial Members. Of these worlds Wardn is something of a mystery. The Patterned Desert features intricate patterns carved into its surface, with no known source. Some experts have suggested that these are caused by anaerobic life while others think they might be some kind of relics from earlier civilisations.

## **IANIC E360697 5**

Ianic is on the Spinward Main, though it is not a world of any great importance, just a place that vessels pass through on their way somewhere better. The world itself is a small dustball almost entirely devoid of surface water although it has a standard atmosphere.

Ianic, like most desert worlds, is not an endless sea of dunes. There are plenty of such regions but in between are mountains, rocky badlands and areas of semi-desert where there is just enough water to support life. There are even a couple of very small 'seas' which would be lakes on any other world. Oases are not uncommon where underground water reserves well up close to the surface.

Overall, much of Ianic is not habitable without starship-grade recycling and imports of fresh water and food. However the world is able to support a population numbering in the millions. There are a few large groupings but most of the population are spread out across the planetary surface in small towns supported by deep wells or natural watercourses.

Government is officially by a bureaucratic system descended from the original colonial administration, but in practice the world government really controls only the region around the capital and what passes for a starport. This is not much more than a few low concrete bunkers located beside a flattened landing area.

Fuel is not available at the port as such, but water can be obtained from the saltwater lake nearby and processed to make liquid hydrogen. A hefty Cr250 landing fee, higher than is usual even at some high-quality ports, is levied at the port. This is payable whether or not ships take on water, as the locals view water as one of their world's most precious resources and feel the need to tax all visitors to offset the loss.

The Jonkeereen, live separately to the mainstream humans for the most part. Jonkeereen were originally adapted from humans to colonise the world of Jonkeer in Deneb sector and have spread to many other worlds. They are capable of operating anywhere that normal humans can, and are thus encountered all across the Imperium in small groups and larger populations.



Those Jonkeereen whose home regions lie close to the capital are governed from there. The remainder, like many of the mainstream human settlements, are too far away for effective governance and go their own way much of the time.

Physically, Jonkeereen are not very different to baseline humans. They were adapted about 400 years ago and have bred true ever since. Tall, lean and dark-skinned, they resemble naturally evolved desert dwellers to a great extent. Their perspiration system is extremely efficient and they have membranes to protect their eyes from wind-borne sand or dust.

Jonkeereen society varies somewhat across the many worlds where they dwell, but the basic traits encountered everywhere are conservatism and cooperation. Their ways are austere and pragmatic in the extreme, and this concern with survival can make them seem harsh or even heartless, especially towards outsiders. They are more likely to help others of their own kind than outsiders, if only for the pragmatic reason that fellow Jonkeereen are less likely to get everyone killed by doing something stupid.

There is little friction between the human and Jonkeereen groups, but little integration either. Both have different ways of doing things and a tendency to ignore one another for the most part. Ianic is big enough for everyone, even if most of its land is uninhabitable.



Observers have occasionally expressed puzzlement that Ianic, a mid-tech world with an E class Starport, has its own spur of the Xboat system. Although there is officially no Scout base present in the system, Ianic is used for two important and related purposes by the IISS.

The Ianic system is used as a storage point for Xboats and their supporting tenders that are not in current service throughout the Marches, plus a number of couriers with various capabilities. There are several reasons for this. One is simply to have extra boats and tenders ready to feed into the system when they are needed, but more importantly there are a number of emergency/urgent message protocols in place. A single courier, most likely from the naval base at Adabiccì or from Lunion itself, arriving in the Ianic system can trigger what some Scout personnel refer to as the 'Ianic Panic', sending Xboats and fast couriers off in all directions with the message aboard. This is normally used for great emergencies, such as the outbreak of the Fourth Frontier War.

This large collection of communications and support ships is not based on Ianic itself but orbits one of the system's gas giants, with a central station coordinating all approaches and departures as well as acting as an accommodation centre. This allows personnel to get off their ships for a while. The station also fulfils the other important function of the system. Backups of all Xboat-carried messages are maintained at Ianic and other, similar, stations. The Scouts have little to do with Ianic proper, although sometimes Scout and Navy personnel conduct desert-survival training on the surface.

## **SPIRELLE C766846 8 S**

A prosperous mid-tech world located on the Spinward Main, Spirelle is well designated as a rich world. There is plenty of water, a standard atmosphere and an environment that is fairly hospitable to humans. The population expanded steadily after the world was initially colonised, until today there are several hundred million people on Spirelle.

This fairly large populace is spread across the globe, mostly around coastal regions as is common on similar worlds. Sea and river transport is the main way to move goods and people between the cities. Although road and air links are reasonably good, water transportation is relatively cheap which makes it attractive for non-urgent goods.

Spirelle exports large quantities of tech level 8 goods to nearby worlds. Much of the world's industry is geared to the export market, producing rugged items that are easy to maintain with only limited facilities. Produce aimed at the local market tends to be more complex and sophisticated.

There is a reasonably good starport, with government-licensed traders handling most negotiations for private cargoes. The starport is, not surprisingly, co-located with the world's largest seaport, with



huge container ships delivering cargoes from all around Spirelle for export. These are often shipped in standard (interstellar) shipping containers which can be handled by the normal starship-loading equipment and carried aboard freight vessels with no need for unloading or repackaging.

Another important export is bulk seafood and related products. Extensive fishing fleets and sea-farming techniques produce a great deal of food. Some goes into the local diet, but a sizable amount is processed and shipped out for export. Live fish and seafood are also exported, though this requires careful handling and makes the produce very expensive to the end purchaser.

With so much of the population living along coasts or on islands, inland areas tend to be somewhat sparsely populated. Spirelle has been settled for centuries, so there are few areas that are truly uncharted, and most localities have at least a few scattered villages. However, there is a fair amount of wilderness in the interior of the continents. Mountains, rain forests and tundra cover much of this area, making it relatively useless to the world's inhabitants.

The Scout Service has a base on Spirelle. This facility mainly exists as a training establishment, making use of the extensive wilderness areas to conduct survival training as well as exercises such as navigational and problem-solving challenges. There are also a few areas leased as large-scale free-fire areas, used to train basic and advanced weapons skills.

Although the Scout Service is not one of the Imperial armed forces, Scouts are often sent into places where they might have to defend themselves, and most personnel are able to handle weapons with at least a basic level of proficiency. The training areas are used for basic and refresher courses for a broad cross-section of personnel. They are also the scene of much more advanced training.

The Scout Service also maintains a security arm to protect its bases and personnel. Normally these teams simply act as guards, but some are trained in the hostage-rescue and 'object retrieval' role. The latter is a catch-all term for everything from getting a valuable alien artefact back from thieves to storming a hijacked Scout Service vessel.

Within the leased areas are mock-ups of various Scout Service vessels and other common starships, most with internal gravity equipment so that they can be stormed in a range of conditions from zero-gravity to a 'shirtsleeves' environment.

The Scout base is located in a fairly remote area, with mountains restricting access from some directions. It has its own port which is not available for non-official vessels to use. There is a sizable community at the base, and a small presence is also maintained at the main Spirelle starport for liaison and recruiting purposes.

Spirelle is, to a great extent, the sort of world the Imperium was formed to support and protect. It is home to large numbers of people who contribute to the Imperial economy as both producers and importers of goods and may eventually develop into a major world. In the meantime Spirelle lacks the high-technology industrial base to construct an effective system defence fleet. While a few imported system defence boats can make a huge difference, a world of this kind cannot truly protect itself from large-scale interstellar threats and must rely on the Imperial Navy to fulfil this function.

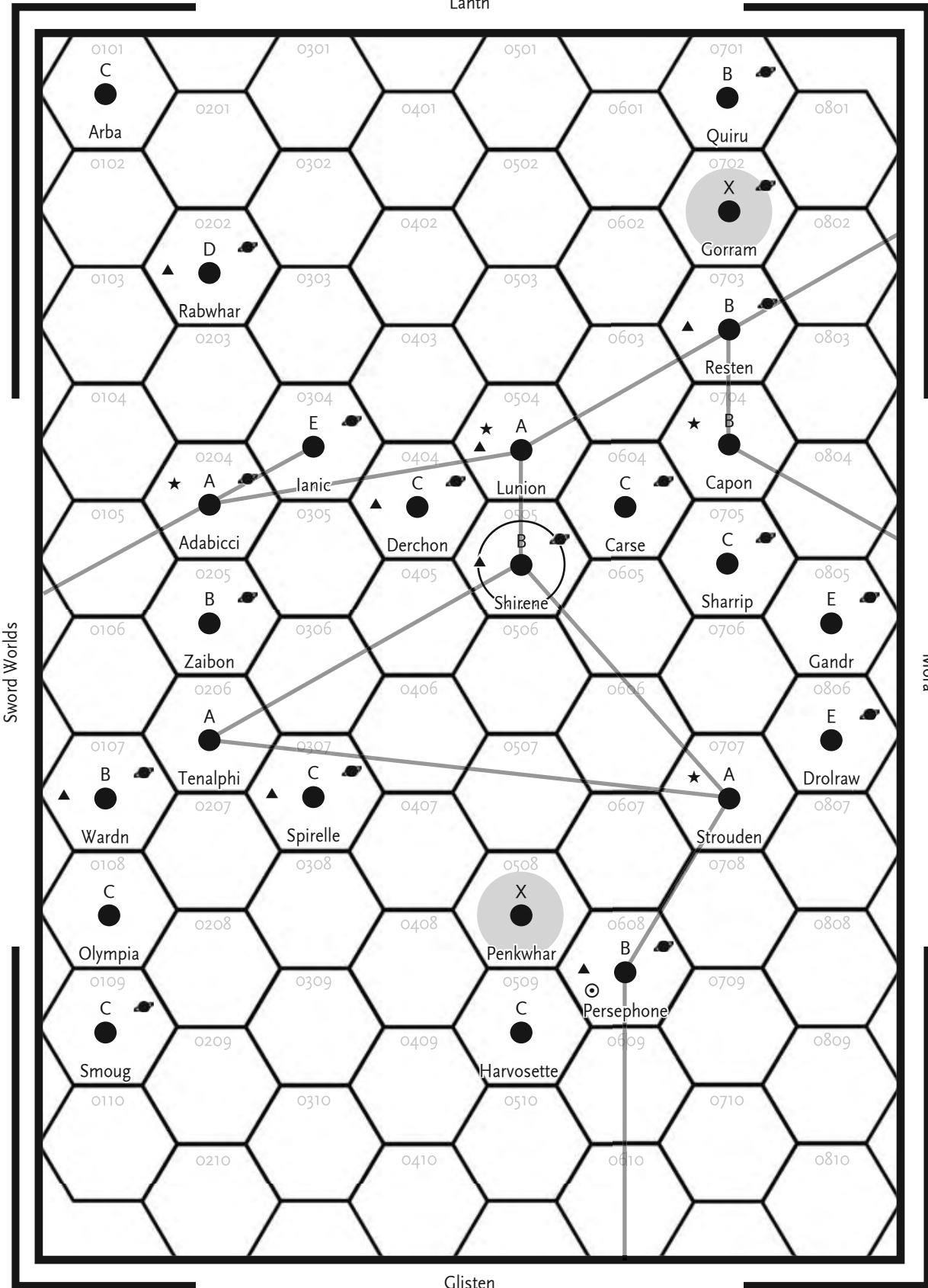
Pro-Imperial observers maintain that worlds like Spirelle would never have the chance to flourish were it not for the Imperium.

### Lunion Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Arba	0101 C200200-C	I Ht Lo NI
Wardn	0107 B756486-B S	NI G
Olympia	0108 C328342-7	Lo NI
Smoug	0109 C14078A-9	I Po De G
Rabwhar	0202 D5448BA-6 S	I G
Adabicci	0204 A57189B-B N	I G
Zaibon	0205 B000544-B	I As G
Tenalphi	0206 A774102-E	I Ht Lo NI
Ianic	0304 E360697-5	I Ri NI De Lt G
Spirelle	0307 C766846-8 S	I Ri G
Derchon	0404 C512799-8 S	I NA G
Lunion	0504 A995984-D 2	I Hi Ht In Cap
Shirene	0505 B984510-B S	I Ag Ga NI A G
Penkwhar	0508 X978310-1	I Lo NI Lt R
Harvosette	0509 C330737-9	I Po NA De
Carse	0604 C463325-9	I Lo NI G
Persephone	0608 B775833-A S	I IWS G
Quiru	0701 B365300-8	I Lo NI G
Gorram	0702 X554220-0	I Lo NI R G
Resten	0703 B310100-B S	I Lo NI G
Capon	0704 B747748-A N	I Ag Ga
Sharrip	0705 C575101-A	I Lo NI G
Strouden	0707 A745988-D N	I Hi Ht In
Gandr	0805 E000347-8	I As Lo G
Drolraw	0806 EAB6311-5	I Fl Lo NI Lt G



Lanth





# MORA SUBSECTOR

Very much the gateway to the Marches, the Mora subsector was the first area to be colonised by the Imperium and has developed steadily ever since. All worlds in the subsector are Imperial members. The subsector is defended by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Fleet, which is based out of Mora itself. The Spinward Marches Sector Fleet is also headquartered at Mora, though if a Depot system is someday designated it may move there.

In the meantime, the co-location of fleet headquarters and the de facto sector ducal court has been criticised for creating an over-politicised fleet. Other observers suggest that it enables better cooperation between the political structure of the Imperium and the Navy, its main military arm. Either way, the Marches is behind the times in retaining a 'crust' defensive strategy when the move to an elastic defence began elsewhere a decade ago.

The Imperial Navy has additional bases at Mercury, Moran and Hexos, which mostly play host to lighter fleet elements. Mora subsector is more intensively patrolled than most other subsectors, and has no less than four light carrier task groups (one per naval base) available for the anti-piracy and general security roles. This makes Mora subsector safer for traffic, but at the cost of taking fleet assets away from frontier areas that might need them more.

Mora is an economic and industrial powerhouse, and has large Megacorporate holdings on-planet as well as elsewhere in the system. Among the lesser corporations also headquartered there is Al Morai, a moderately sized shipping line that provides a reliable service through to the Darrian Confederation via the Vilis subsector.

Only two worlds in the subsector (Palique and Fen's Gren) are Amber Zoned and there are no Red Zones. However, access to what is left of the Imperial Research Station on Duale is not possible. Details of what the station was working on are unavailable but in 1102 a massive explosion caused heavy damage to the station and caused its temporary abandonment. Naval assets and Imperial Marines remain on station (though at a curiously respectful distance) to prevent intruders from entering the site.

Palique's Amber Zone is due to frequent meteor bombardment. The world is a captured body that follows a highly eccentric orbit which takes it through one of the system's two dense planetoid belts twice a year. Although conveniently placed as an industrial centre for the minerals mined from the rich belts, Palique can be a hazardous destination for starships. All of the world's cities are deep underground for protection and the world is justly famous for the quality of vacc suits and vacuum-environment survival gear manufactured there.

Pimane is an interesting astrophysical oddity. Its surface has a number of extremely deep rift valleys which contain an atmosphere dense enough to support life. The surface is a near-vacuum.

Nexine, an under populated water world, is currently the site of a study to determine if genetically-altered humans could be seeded on the world. The project is in its early days as yet.

## **NEXINE C97A443 8 S**

Nexine is a large world, almost entirely covered in oceans. The atmosphere is of a fairly standard composition and density but its taint makes the use of a filter mask necessary. The world is part of the Palique Cluster, on both the Coreward Xboat route from Mora and also the Jump-2 route into Trin's Veil and ultimately Glisten subsectors.

Several attempts have been made to settle Nexine at various times, usually without success. A small population, numbering in the tens of thousands, dwells in far-flung communities, all of them small, situated on islands across the globe. There is usable land for many more people than currently live on Nexine, but not much incentive for them to immigrate.

The island-towns of Nexine are broadly self-sufficient, each with its own agricultural base and light industries, fisheries and similar requirements to maintain equipment in local use and feed the people. The overall tech level is 8, though industry is at the cottage level and totally insufficient to export any significant amount of goods.

There are a few larger settlements, notably the capital which is co-located with the Starport and the Scout base. Even here, the population is not large enough to support much in the way of heavy industry and it is the Scout base that is the mainstay of Nexine's economy. The Scout Service contracts with local businesses for everything from food supplies to cleaning services, as does the starport.

The Scout base is small, consisting of a fenced-off corner of the starport leased by the Scout Service. A handful of cutters and shuttles serve the Express Boat tenders that support Xboats passing through the system and there is an extensive communications suite. In all, there are no more than two hundred Scout Service personnel in the system at any one time, even counting the crews working offworld.

Trade ships do come through Nexine but the world's tiny economy cannot support buying and selling, nor produce enough of anything to be worth freighting. Thus the port makes only a little money

from services to ships, such as berthing fees, rations and the like. Crews do spend a significant amount of money in the capital's bars, restaurants and shops.

This dependence on the port for income has in many ways crippled the growth of Nexine's own economy. A disproportionate percentage of the world's population is employed in service industries around the port, leaving too few to develop other sectors. Were this source of income to dry up then Nexine's economy would almost certainly crash. This situation is all too common on worlds with a fairly low population. If the port generates enough income to allow investment in other methods of generating wealth then the economy can grow. If not then the world will get by but never have a chance to really develop.

What Nexine needs more than anything else is more people. There have been attempts to bring in immigrants using schemes ranging from generous land grants to refugee-relocation projects, but so far nothing has worked well enough to make a difference. The current idea is to see if genetically engineered humans could be seeded on Nexine, making use of the oceans that make up 99% of the world's surface.

As yet the project consists of little more than a few scientific teams doing field research, though presumably somewhere in the Imperium there is a semi-aquatic subspecies of humans either already in existence or currently being engineered. The scientific teams are researching a wide range of possibly important factors, from mineral content in the oceans to current conditions. Extensive seabed mapping is also underway, presumably to locate suitable regions for an aquatic or semi-aquatic population to be settled in.

Some of the Imperial scientists working in Nexine's oceans are Dolphins. These were uplifted to sentience long ago and are now a species apart from their lesser cousins. Their unique insight into the aquatic conditions of Nexine will likely prove invaluable to the project.

There are several small scientific outposts in various corners of the world, and robotic information-gathering drones have been dropped into the seas in great numbers. The main scientific base is a fair-sized installation with a crew of about a hundred technicians, scientists and support workers, from which research submarines of various sizes depart on their cruises. Deep-diving subs have also been deployed to Nexine and have begun penetrating the deep ocean trenches and exploring the abyssal plains. This represents a significant investment in money as well as effort, so presumably there is a real chance that the project will go ahead at some point in the future.

## **MORA AA99AC7 F 2**

Mora is, both historically and astrographically, the Gateway to the Marches. To some extent it is also the key, or at least the keyholder.

Mora is one of the richest worlds for many parsecs and is extremely important in local politics, even though technically Duchess Delphine of Mora wields no more power and has no more responsibilities than any other subsector Duke in the Marches.

Mora is a large world with a dense, tainted atmosphere. It is almost entirely covered in oceans, with only a few large islands and smaller archipelagos breaking the surface. Nevertheless, Mora was the first world of the Marches to be settled, and received far more investment than other early colonies.

Starting in 60, Mora was developed as a trading centre financed by Ling Standard Products. This required a good starport, and that led naturally to the creation of yards to overhaul trade and exploration vessels. Soon afterward, full-scale shipbuilding began.

As the early explorers pushed out into the sector and the colonists followed, Mora was the interface point where goods were marshalled for shipping back into the Imperium and settlement missions made preparations for the final leg of their journeys. It was through Mora that goods from the Sword Worlds, the Darrian Confederation and even the Zhodani Consulate came.

Eventually, Trin became important as a secondary route into the Marches but for many decades everything and everyone came through Mora. Some of the colonists never went any further, choosing to settle on Mora rather than advance further into unexplored territory. The world's population grew rapidly and with it, the amount of industry it could support.

Today, Mora has a population numbering in tens of billions, dwelling in gigantic mega-cities that cover much of the available land mass as well as the surrounding seabed. The upper regions of these cities project high above the surface of the seas, each with a spaceport on the top.

Most of the cities lie on or close to the equator, and have spread so much that they run into one another, creating the image of a single city circling the entire equator. Smaller cities are separated from the main belt by oceanic trenches.

Most of what little dry land Mora possesses is given over to high-technology intensive agriculture, with additional food production provided by seabed farming. There are, however, a few exceptions. One is Mora's massive Downport, which takes up most of an equatorial island. Another is the World Park, a large nature reserve. There is also an island reserved as a private estate for the high officials of the world government.

Mora's system of government is unusual, in that Duchess Delphine is not just the world's official representative but also the head of Mora's government. In practice the duchess delegates her role of representative to the Imperium to a deputy, except when she feels that personal intervention is necessary.





All senior governmental positions are held by women, and Mora is legally a matriarchy. There are some who suggest that this is a violation of Imperial rules but in fact the Imperium permits any form of government that the local population desire so long as it does not violate High Law. Males are not enslaved on Mora, merely not permitted to hold high office, so this is not a problem.

Mora has no police force or other civilian emergency services. All such tasks are undertaken by branches of the armed forces. One particularly important branch is concerned with orbital traffic control and vessel tracking. In a system as busy as this, local space can become very crowded and keeping the traffic flowing is a full-time job for a great many people. There is so much traffic around Mora Imperial Highport, the main port for the system, that a secondary Highport has been constructed for use by those with permission. This includes vessels of the Imperial Navy and the sector administration, but primarily Megacorporate starships belonging to Delgado, Tukera and Imperiallines, which jointly funded the venture. These vessels receive heavily discounted services and a streamlined customs system. The port is secured by mercenary troops and patrol craft supplied by Instellarms, which has a large commercial presence there. The volume of traffic is still so high that there is talk of building a third port to serve government and sector administration vessels.

Mora is, of course, highly industrialised, and has a very high technology level. This makes the world one of the most important economic players not just in the Marches but also in Deneb sector, where a significant proportion of Mora's goods are sold.

High-technology industry is heavily supported by the Mora Technical Institute, which performs cutting-edge research into gravitics, electronics and manufacturing technology as well as training graduates to work in these industries. MTI is somewhat overshadowed by the Imperial Mora University, which deals more in history, political studies and similar fields. The social status associated with being a graduate of IMU is higher than MTI and it is said, not without reason that technical institute graduates can expect a good, well-paid career working in firms owned by the families of IMU attendees.

The remainder of the Mora system is heavily exploited. There are mining outposts throughout the planetoid belt and the moons of both gas giants are also heavily mined, with scientific installations scattered here and there. The belt is also the site of major biotechnology industries, conducting both research and production.

The system's scout and naval bases, located on large planetoids in the belt, are both huge. The Scout base is the IISS regional headquarters for the Spinward Marches and marshals a huge communications fleet in addition to a flotilla of scout/couriers, express boat tenders and survey vessels for routine tasks all across the Marches.

The naval base is the headquarters for the Sector and Subsector fleets, though normally the sector admiral resides on Mora and commands from there. This is cause for concern in some quarters, representing part of the over-politicisation of the sector fleet. The navy and scout service both maintain liaison elements at the port and the capital, but there are those that feel that the de facto sector duke and the sector admiral should not have offices in the same building.

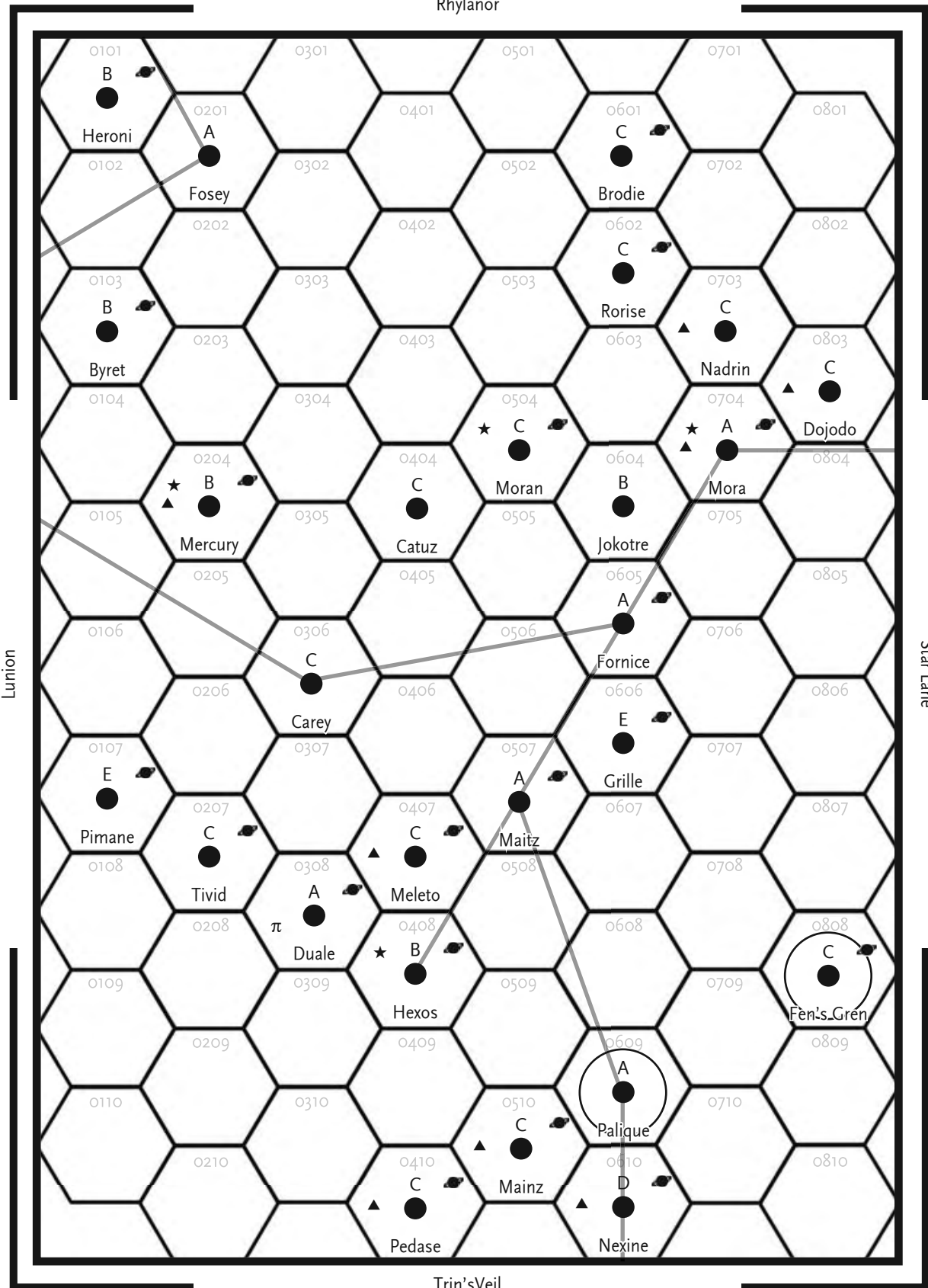
Be that as it may, the Mora system is home to several heavy battle squadrons and cruiser squadrons of the sector fleet, and the naval base has several more capital ships in reserve, though they may not be in the best of condition. Many of these ships would, in wartime, be crewed by reservists currently living and working on Mora. Some could be ready in days, some in weeks, and some would probably prove unusable when activated.

If another frontier war ever breaks out, it is from Mora that the fleet will sally out to defend the Marches, and from here that the war will be directed. If the worst comes to pass, it might be that Mora could be the last bastion of the Imperium in the Spinward Marches. Certainly it would be held with great determination. Were Mora to be lost, the Marches would either have already fallen or defeat would become inevitable. Unsurprisingly, Mora's system defence squadron is one of the most powerful in the Imperium.

### **Mora Subsector**

Name		Statistics	Remarks	
Heroni	0101	B6449B9-8	I Hi In	G
Byret	0103	B485697-6	I Ri Ag NI	G
Pimane	0107	E500343-4	I Lo NI Lt	G
Posey	0201	A633656-A	I Po NA NI	
Mercury	0204	B658663-8	2 I Ag Ga NI	G
Tivid	0207	C534477-8	I NI	G
Carey	0306	C579221-9	I Lo NI	
Duale	0308	A5437BF-B	I Po IRS	G
Catuz	0404	C22048C-9	I Po NI De	
Meleto	0407	C675100-5	S I Lo NI Lt	G
Hexos	0408	B534420-8	N I NI	G
Pedase	0410	C415346-7	S I NI	G
Moran	0504	C367300-8	N I Lo NI	G
Maitz	0507	A201511-B	I NI	G
Mainz	0510	C553352-A	S I Lo Po NI	G
Brodie	0601	C410468-7	I NI	G
Rorise	0602	C994100-A	I Lo NI	G
Jokotre	0604	B6548D9-7	I NA	
Fornice	0605	A354A87-C	I Hi Ht	G
Grille	0606	E410335-7	I Lo NI	G
Palique	0609	A511965-E	I Hi Ht NA In	A
Nexine	0610	C97A443-8	S I NI Wa	G
Nadrin	0703	D120203-6	S I Lo Po NI	
Mora	0704	AA99AC7-F	2 I Hi Ht In Cap	G
Dojodo	0803	C512311-7	S I Lo NI	
Fen's Gren	0808	C647346-9	I Lo NI	A G

Rhylanor





# FIVE SISTERS SUBSECTOR

Five Sisters subsector was first explored by the merchant captain Ignaz Ruffleran, who named the worlds of Mirriam, Jone, Penelope, Karin and Ucella after his daughters. When an official subsector designation was assigned, these worlds gave what had previously been District 267 its name.

Lying beyond the Imperium proper and connected to it only by a tenuous link through the Sword Worlds, the subsector was not heavily colonised at first. A coordinated effort was implemented in 740 under the auspices of Emperor Paulo I but this was curtailed half a century later after little success. The fact that efforts to colonise a region close to two worlds inhabited by the psionics—using Droyne coincided with the Psionics Suppressions has not escaped notice.

Since that time the subsector has remained an isolated territory under the administration of the Imperial Navy. It is the responsibility of the 208<sup>th</sup> Fleet, which is unusual in having capital ships permanently assigned to it. This is more likely to do with the interdiction of Andor and Candory than protection of the few Imperial assets in the region, though why battleships are needed to enforce a Red Zone remains a mystery. Droyne ships are not normally stopped – the Red Zone seems to be there to keep people out of Andor and Candory, not to keep the Droyne in.

The 208<sup>th</sup> Fleet has its headquarters at Iderati, the subsector capital, plus six other bases in a ring around Andor and Candory. These are home to patrol ships and vessels that enforce the interdiction within the Red Zoned systems but also have heavier non-Jump capable defence squadrons than is normal for such installations. These are deployed widely across the system and may be in place to catch vessels trying to slip through to Droyne worlds. The fact that the base systems are Amber Zoned helps to deter visitors, though it seems to have more to do with the danger of intruding into a heavily defended system than anything else.

Andor and Candory, as already noted, are Red Zoned and both are Droyne worlds. As well as the base systems surrounding the interdicted area there are three other Amber Zones in place, at Jinx, Lakou and 875–496. Of these only Lakou is an Imperial member. It seems likely that the Imperial Research Station at Froin (designated Research Station Zeta) is involved with some kind of research connected with the Droyne but as usual the authorities refuse to confirm, deny or even comment.

There are 10 non-Imperial worlds in the subsector, not counting the Droyne ones. Most are located to Rimward of the Imperial zone, in the direction of what some Imperials call the 'Outrim Void' even though it is only Rimward of the Marches and is hardly a void. The term was probably first coined in an entertainment show and seems

to have stuck. In any case, travel 'outrim' into Menorial subsector via Five Sisters is discouraged by the authorities. Despite this, exploratory trade missions do occasionally crawl along the Spinward Main all the way to Five Sisters and then head out into the relative unknown in search of new markets and that hoped-for big score.

## SAXE EAA5543 7

Saxe is located almost at the extreme Spinward end of the Spinward Main and just beyond the Imperial border. It is a large world with an exotic atmosphere. This can mean several things, though the common denominator is that the gas mix will not be breathable to unassisted humans.

In the case of Saxe, the atmosphere is a nitrogen-carbon-dioxide mix, with very little oxygen. While not actively toxic to humans, this gas mix cannot support respiration. An unprotected person would breathe the 'air' in and out while they collapsed and died of anoxia. In order to avoid this unpleasant fate, a full air supply is needed although a sealed unit such as a vacc suit is not.

Saxe was settled by a rather optimistic mission that pushed out ahead of the general spread of Imperials into the Marches and was forced to make a home on Saxe when the colony ship's systems began to fail. The ship was used as a habitat until more permanent structures could be created, and was then cannibalised for spare parts.

It was some years before other colony missions arrived in the area, and longer still before trade ships began calling at the rudimentary starport constructed outside Saxe City, as the original settlement became known. By this time, several other small towns had been constructed, though the colonists never spread very far from their original landing area.

Saxe has gone through periods of oppression and internal conflict, but today a fairly liberal republican system is in place, with some of the outlying settlements more or less independent. As noted above the population, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, has not spread very widely and is confined to one continent. Vast tracts of that continent, and the whole of the others, remains untamed wilderness which, in the majority of cases, is entirely uncharted.

It is possible that there are other groups on Saxe, perhaps later arrivals, though there has never been any contact with the 'official' residents. On a large world like this, a small enclave could go entirely unnoticed – especially if it were deliberately concealed. The only people likely to do something of that sort would be pirates or planetary raiders who had set up a base of operations. While possible, it is not likely.



There are also rumours of a 'lost colony' of Darrians who dwell in a sealed city floating in the world's oceans somewhere. This seems to be even less likely than other hidden-inhabitant claims, though the rumour is quite persistent.

Saxe is friendly to the Imperium, and is visited by Navy patrols from time to time. Trade ships are rarer, though occasionally a Jump-2 capable trader uses the world as a stopover on the Five Sisters-Darrian run. Otherwise the colonists go about their business as they always have.

Saxe itself has a fairly primitive ecosystem. The atmospheric gas mix cannot support animal life, nor even insects. This makes flowering plants unviable, but other types seem to do well enough. Ferns, mosses and grass-like plants grow wherever there is soil to support them, and shallow watercourses in particular are choked with primitive plant life which grows in great mats that can eventually form a natural, living dam.

These plant-dams create pools surrounded by swampy areas which are ideal for the creation of riotous plant growth. The swamps in turn are home to primitive water-dwelling animals resembling shrimp, krill and similar small crustaceans.

According to some scientists, Saxe is moving towards one day being a terra-prime world. As more swamps are created by plant-dams, the amount of plant life performing photosynthesis on Sax is increasing, putting small but increasing amounts of oxygen into the air. It may be that this will someday lead to a breathable atmosphere and the emergence of water-dwelling life onto the land. For next few million years however, any enterprising lungfish-equivalent that sticks its head up to try breathing air for a change is likely to be terminally disappointed.

Various scientific institutions have expressed an interest in studying the emergence of life on Saxe, though for the time being the difficulty in getting to the world from the major Imperial centres of learning in

the Marches has prevented any real effort in this direction. Darrian scientists have visited the world from time to time and even set up a temporary research facility in the 1060s.

This installation was little more than a set of prefabricated living quarters just outside one of the smaller local towns. It was hurriedly evacuated in the early months of the Fourth Frontier War and has not been re-staffed. If this ever happens, the Darrians will need to completely restock the facility. It still stands, but the ever-pragmatic Saxans stripped the place within hours of the Darrians' departure. It is not known whether permission was given, but the Darrians were apparently friendly with the locals and certainly interacted with them on a daily basis, so it does seem likely.

## **MIRRIAM B9998A6 A N**

Mirriam is a large world with a dense, tainted atmosphere with somewhat more than 90% of the surface is covered by oceans. A considerable amount of Mirriam's land takes the form of mountain ranges, small islands or else is unusable due to other conditions. This includes most of the arctic and sub-arctic regions.

As a result the population, numbering in the hundred of millions, mostly dwells in cities located just off the coast of land masses and projecting up above the waves. Of those that are built on land, some are located in mountain valleys but most lie on the coastal plains where they can benefit from sea-farming. This is an important industry and ranges from fisheries to vast seabed farms protected by domes, growing fields of cereals and vegetables for consumption in the cities and for shipment out through the port.

Mirriam is a commercial exporter of foodstuffs to the surrounding worlds, but this is of fairly minor importance to the local economy. Most of the food shipped out of Mirriam goes to the naval bases in the surrounding area. Imperial-navy ration contracts pay better than commercial sales most of the time, so much of the world's output is tied into fulfilling these requirements.





Most of Mirriam's income comes from exports of industrial and technological items. Only two worlds in the subsector (Iderati and Karin) have better technology available for export, and Mirriam's population base is big enough to allow for large-scale industrial production of tech level 10 items. Grav vehicles and electronics for various applications are exported across the subsector.

Mirriam is a dictatorship, though a fairly moderate and benign one. Laws are not excessively tight and enforcement is fair for the most part. Living standards are good and there are opportunities for personal advancement, all of which contributes to a contented population and a popular government.

One of the routes to advancement is Imperial service. Mirriam has both a naval base and a Scout Service Way Station, and both recruit extensively from among the world's population. Mirriam has a generous system of tax breaks and enhanced second-career opportunities for veterans of the Imperial services. Many veterans enter service with Mirriam's system squadron or the reserve armed forces, while ex-Scouts often find a new home with the Deep Sea Exploration Service (DSES).

The DSES, as the name suggests, is dedicated to mapping the ocean beds and researching the creatures that live there. For the most part it is a reasonably safe occupation, but there are always hazards inherent in exploring caves in the side of an ocean trench ten kilometres beneath the surface.

Mirriam's naval base is one of several forming a ring around the Droyne worlds of Andor and Candory. Due to the extremely strict nature of the Red Zones around those worlds, the nearest Imperial systems all have naval bases and the forces there are on high alert. Caution is advised as the Imperial Navy is more than ready to fire on vessels which seem to be attempting to slip through or to sneak something past the blockade.

As a result extremely thorough inspections and customs checks are undertaken, and any irregularity can result in a ship being impounded and stripped down to the hull braces, while the crew get pretty much the same treatment. Vessels capable of making the three-parsec transit are viewed with more suspicion than those that obviously could not reach Candory.

There are two ways to cross the gap to Candory. The simplest is to use a Jump-3 capable vessel. However, it is also possible to fit extra fuel tanks in a ship's hold. Collapsible 'fuel bladders' and more permanent conversions are both commercially available. Using this system, the ship Jumps as far as possible and emerges in deep space. Fuel is then pumped from the extra tanks to the main ones, ready for a second or third Jump. This can take time and is not 100% safe, but it does make long voyages possible with a Jump-1 ship. Any vessel with extra fuel tankage of this sort is sure to arouse suspicion and this is very hard to conceal from an inspection crew.

Mirriam's Scout base is a full Way Station, serving as a repository for communications vessels serving the long route back into the Imperium as well as plying between the Imperial base worlds in the subsector. A sizable fleet of survey and exploration vessels is also stationed at Mirriam.

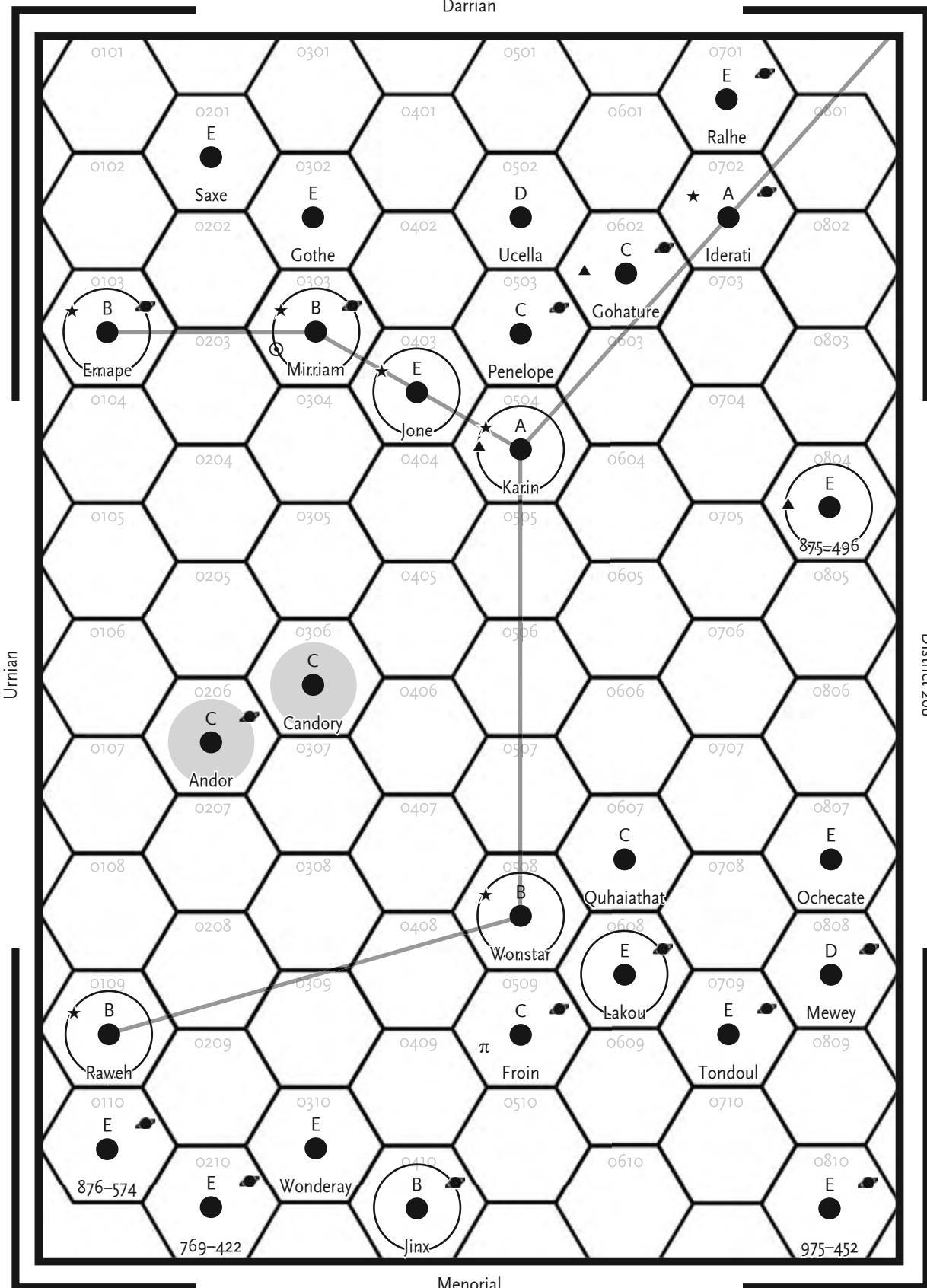
Scout ships routinely depart on missions to Spinward and Rimward. Most are of fairly short duration but some can be out for very long periods. The Scout Service has recently acquired several ex-Navy tankers and Dromedaries (ships that carry both fuel and dry stores). Some of these support scout missions in their original capacity, ie as resupply vessels. This is rapidly becoming known as the most boring job in the Scout Service apart from Xboat-pilot duty. As Xboat pilots joke; at least aboard an Xboat you've always got someone interesting to talk to.

Other tankers and dromedaries have been converted to 'Scout Base Ships' which can carry a flock of smaller vessels such as Scout/Couriers, Survey Scouts and the like. They are designed to make use of the high Jump capacity of naval tankers (jump-4 typically) to reach an area quickly, then remain on station as a mobile base for the smaller vessels as they collect data on the surrounding area. Thus far several base-ship missions have been sent out, all of them to Spinward.

### Five Sisters Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Emape	0103 B564500-B N I Ag Ga NI	A G
Raweh	0109 B130300-B N I Lo Po NI	A
876-574	0110 E687200-0	Lo NI G
Saxe	0201 EAA5543-7	Fl NI
Andory	0206 C695735-9	I Ag Ga R G
769-422	0210 E754401-8	NI G
Gothe	0302 E22159B-6	I Po NI
Mirriam	0303 B9998A6-A N I IWS	A G
Candory	0306 C593634-8	I NI R
Wonderay	0310 E88A46A-4	NI Wa Lt
Jone	0403 B792785-9 N I	A
Jinx	0410 D100133-7	Lo NI A G
Ucella	0502 D574654-7	Ag Ga NI
Penelope	0503 C460642-4	I Ri NI De Lt G
Karin	0504 A767768-C 2 I Ht Ri Ag Ga	A
Wonstar	0508 B455741-7 N I Ag	A
Froin	0509 C535225-9	I Lo IRS G
Gohature	0602 C754766-7 S I Ag Ga	G
Quhaiathat	0607 C31479B-9	I
Lakou	0608 E779454-7	I NI A G
Ralhe	0701 E224564-8	NI G
Iderati	0702 A887798-C N I Ht Ri Ag Ga Cap	G
Tondoul	0709 E5136A7-4	NA NI Lt G
875-496	0804 E888421-7 S NI	A
Ochecate	0807 E747569-7	Ag Ga NI
Mewey	0808 D786799-5	Ri Ag Ga Lt G
975-452	0810 E100316-9	Lo NI G

Darrian





# DISTRICT 268

With the exception of two worlds (Mertactor and Mille Falcs), District 268 lies entirely outside the Imperial border. It is, however, an area of Imperial interest. Such regions are designated as Districts until such time as they are brought into the Imperium. At that point they are assigned a suitable subsector name along with the usual Imperial administrative apparatus and a subsector fleet to provide security.

Most of the worlds of the subsector are on the Spinward Main, though its meandering path may require a detour into Sword Worlds subsector to reach some. All worlds are within Jump-2 of the Main. There are two areas of empty space within the subsector, which tend to restrict traffic. These rifts lie to Spinward-Coreward and Trailing-Rimward of Collace. They are unofficially known as the Greater and Lesser Collace Rifts respectively.

Imperial businesses are active in District 268, though McClellan Factors is engaged in actively squeezing out its rivals, sailing very close to the wind with some of its tactics. The Imperial worlds of Mertactor and Mille Falcs are used as a regional base for those Imperial firms trading into the subsector and are administered from neighbouring Glisten subsector.

There is no Subsector Fleet as such for District 268. Patrols are maintained from Five Sisters subsector into the Spinward side of the district and from Glisten into Trailing side. In addition, a small force of patrol vessels is based out of Mille Falcs. This is officially a detachment of the Glisten force but operates independently. It is composed of a handful of older patrol vessels and escorts, backed up by a couple of old destroyers.

Probably the most important non-Imperial world in District 268 is Collace, a high-tech industrial world with pro-Imperial leanings. Collace is a strong contender for the role of subsector capital if and when the district is absorbed. However, many worlds want nothing of the Imperium and are passively resistant to Imperial expansion.

Among these anti-Imperial worlds is Trexalon, which has been involved in a cold war with Collace for many years now. The government of Trexalon and the Trexalon Technical Consortium (TTC) it leads knows that the Imperium will not tolerate armed resistance and can bring vast forces to bear if the TTC starts attacking Imperial facilities and ships in the region. Resistance is thus low-key and below the level that will trigger an Imperial response. There are, however, rumours that the TTC is behind a number of insurrections and similar problems on pro-imperial worlds.

The world of Nirton is Red Zoned, and there are three Amber Zones. Pavabid is one of these, where the world government is a theocracy which follows the 'Pavabidian Heresy' (as it is called elsewhere) of the Church of Stellar Divinity. Like other branches of the church, the Pavabidian version believes that stars are holy, but maintains that all stars other than Pavabid's are evil. Offworlders are from 'enemy stars' and are highly suspect. The world is governed from a flying palace that the locals, who are kept in a state of mid-tech ignorance, are told is kept aloft by divine favour. In fact it was built on Glisten and uses gravitic technology.

Bowman is the site of one of the largest planetoid fields in existence, which covers five orbits rather than the more usual one. The system has only one planet, a gas giant known as Bowman Prime whose moons are inhabited, as are sections of the vast Bowman Belt. Most of the prospecting and mining in Bowman is done by independents and small firms but LSP has a large facility in-system and occasionally expands its operation, to the annoyance of locals who feel they are being edged out.

Tarsus is an agricultural world settled about 600 years ago from Fornice. There are two communities of Sword Worlders on-planet as well. One is a low-tech settlement peopled by the remnants of an oil refinery project set up around -104 and the other is descended from a Tizonian Army unit that arrived during the Second Frontier War fleeing war crimes charges. The Imperial Megacorporation SuSAG has a small research facility in the Tarsus system. Exactly what it is investigating remains a mystery outside the corporation.

## **BOWMAN D000300 9 S**

Most star systems have a 'mainworld', which is the world with the highest population in the system. Usually this is a rocky planet which may or may not have an atmosphere, water and so forth. Sometimes, however, the 'mainworld' is an asteroid belt. By convention, an asteroid belt that is not the mainworld of a system is referred to as a planetoid belt, although in astrographical terms the two words are more or less interchangeable.

Bowman's presents something of a classification problem, simply because it is so huge. The Bowman Belt does not fill the usual one orbit that most belts do, but several. There are separate zones within the belt and there has been some debate as to whether these are actually several separate belts, in which case Bowman has an asteroid belt and several planetoid belts, or whether it is all one asteroid belt.

To the people who live and work in the Bowman Belt, the point is moot. There is one belt, and they live and work in one part of it. Distant regions of the belt are of no real importance because they are very far away.

The Bowman system centres on a star named Bowman. This is slightly unusual; normally star systems are named for their mainworld and listed on the star charts as such. Star names are often different to that of the system and are of no great importance; people live on planets, not stars, so it is the world that it most important to makers of charts. In addition to the star and the vast Bowman Belt, there is one planet. This is the gas giant Bowman Prime and its gaggle of moons. Clusters of planetoids are found at Bowman Prime's Trojan points (ahead of it and behind it in its orbit. There are no normal-sized planets in the Bowman system.

The Bowman system is unusual in other ways. Normally the starport is located on the mainworld, but Bowman's port is actually on Alpha, the innermost moon of Bowman Prime. A Scout base of sorts is also located there. This is a very small installation which operates a few ships on various missions in the local systems as well as Bowman itself. These are often of the 'rock plotting' sort, necessary for the maintenance of accurate charts but boring and unglamorous.

The population, numbering about 8500, refer to themselves as Belters. This term means different things to different people. To some it means the inhabitants of an asteroid or planetoid belt. Others take it to mean those who make their living from the asteroid-mining and prospecting industries, often but not always in a belt. Here in Bowman it simply means the local population as opposed to 'company men'.

There is no government structure in the Bowman Belt, nor any real body of law as such. The Belters live in small communities or family groups and are scattered quite widely. The main population concentrations, such as they are, can be found at the town of Garrison which has grown up around the starport and at some of the larger asteroids. The most important of these is Koenig's Rock in the main belt.

In addition to the Belter population there are about 2500–3000 'company men' in the system at any one time. These are not residents or Belters but are well-paid employees of Ling Standard Products. LSP has more or less taken over the Trailing Trojan cluster of asteroids, and runs off independents with armed cutters and mercenary security troopers. There is an LSP 'company town' in the cluster, from which mining platforms are sent out to nearby asteroids to extract whatever minerals can be found there. Ingots of ore are then launched by mass driver to the two LSP stations near Garrison.

These two stations are owned and operated by LSP but are required by contract to process ore extracted by the Belter population as well. They orbit Bowman Prime at the Trojan points of Alpha, from where it is easy to transport the processed ore to the port for shipment out of the system.

A third station orbits at the outer edge of Bowman Prime's ring system, but does not mine for ore. Instead it extracts a range of chemicals as well as oxygen and hydrogen from ice chunks collected from Bowman Prime's extensive ring system.

There are also two other operations taking place in the Bowman system. A small archaeological dig is underway on Epsilon, one of Bowman Prime's larger moons. This was discovered in 1093 to be the site of a pre-Maghiz Darrian outpost.

Meanwhile salvage crews continue to pick over the extensive field of starship wreckage drifting among the asteroids of Bowman Prime's Leading Trojan cluster. This dates from the period just after the Second Frontier War, when a Sword Worlder fleet that had refused to surrender and carried out a highly successful commerce-raiding campaign was finally tracked to its base in the cluster and eliminated. The exploits of this fleet, under Admiral Denisov, form part of Sword Worlder naval tradition to this day.

## ***PAVABID C6678D8 6***

Pavabid is an independent mid-tech world lying a few parsecs from Imperial space on the most Rimward arm of the Spinward Main. It is a very habitable world for humans, with slightly lighter gravity than Earth, a standard atmosphere and plenty of water. Unsurprisingly, Pavabid was settled early in the history of the Marches and the population steadily grew to its present level, about 700 million.

At some point in the world's history, the Church of Stellar Divinity became the world's most widely practised religion, and later on the official state religion worldwide. It is somewhat unusual for worlds within the Imperium to have a state religion but not unknown – if the population want a state religion then the Imperium will not interfere. Outside the Imperial border, of course, world governments can do as they please.

On Pavabid, the Church of Stellar Divinity moved from state religion to religious state, turning Pavabid into a theocracy, although uncommon this is not unknown within the Imperium. However, without offworld influences the world religion took a sinister turn. The Church of Stellar Divinity has declared the Pavabid theocracy an official heresy and condemns the actions of the world government.





The Pavabidian Heresy maintains that while all stars are indeed gods, only Pavabid's star is good and benign. In order to protect them from the influences of these 'enemy stars', the population are kept isolated and not permitted contact with offworlders. Travel to other systems is out of the question.

Offworld visitors to Pavabid are restricted to a trade enclave around the starport. This is guarded by Church troops and staffed by the most zealous and incorruptibly faithful Church officials. Law enforcement within the enclave is strict, equivalent to law level 8. Outside it is nearer 10, with all manner of Church-imposed rules intruding into all aspects of daily life.

The people of Pavabid are mostly content and kept that way by Church rules that prevent them from finding out about ways of life they might like better. All the same, life is not bad. Pavabid is covered in small towns built around light industry, with agricultural regions in between. Most Pavabidians simply cannot conceive of any other life even if they were to try.

The head of the Pavabidian government is known as the Son of the Star, and is considered to be the embodiment of part of the star's consciousness. This makes him both divine and infallible. He dwells in a floating palace that moves around Pavabid at the Son of the Star's whim and is allegedly held aloft by the hand of god. In fact it is a technological construct using impressive but mundane gravitic technology.

Pavabid lies directly between Collace and Trexalon, two worlds that are bitter rivals and hold diametrically opposed views about the Imperium. Collace supports Imperial expansion into District 268 and hopes to become the subsector capital while Trexalon is doing everything it can to hamper Imperial advancement and delay or even prevent the region's incorporation into the Imperium.

Since both Collace and Trexalon ships come to trade at the port, clashes of interests have occurred from time to time on Pavabid. However, in recent months things have taken a turn for the worse. A survey of Pavabid discovered extensive deposits of platinum and, more importantly, iridium. Iridium is used in the production of jump drives and is extremely valuable.

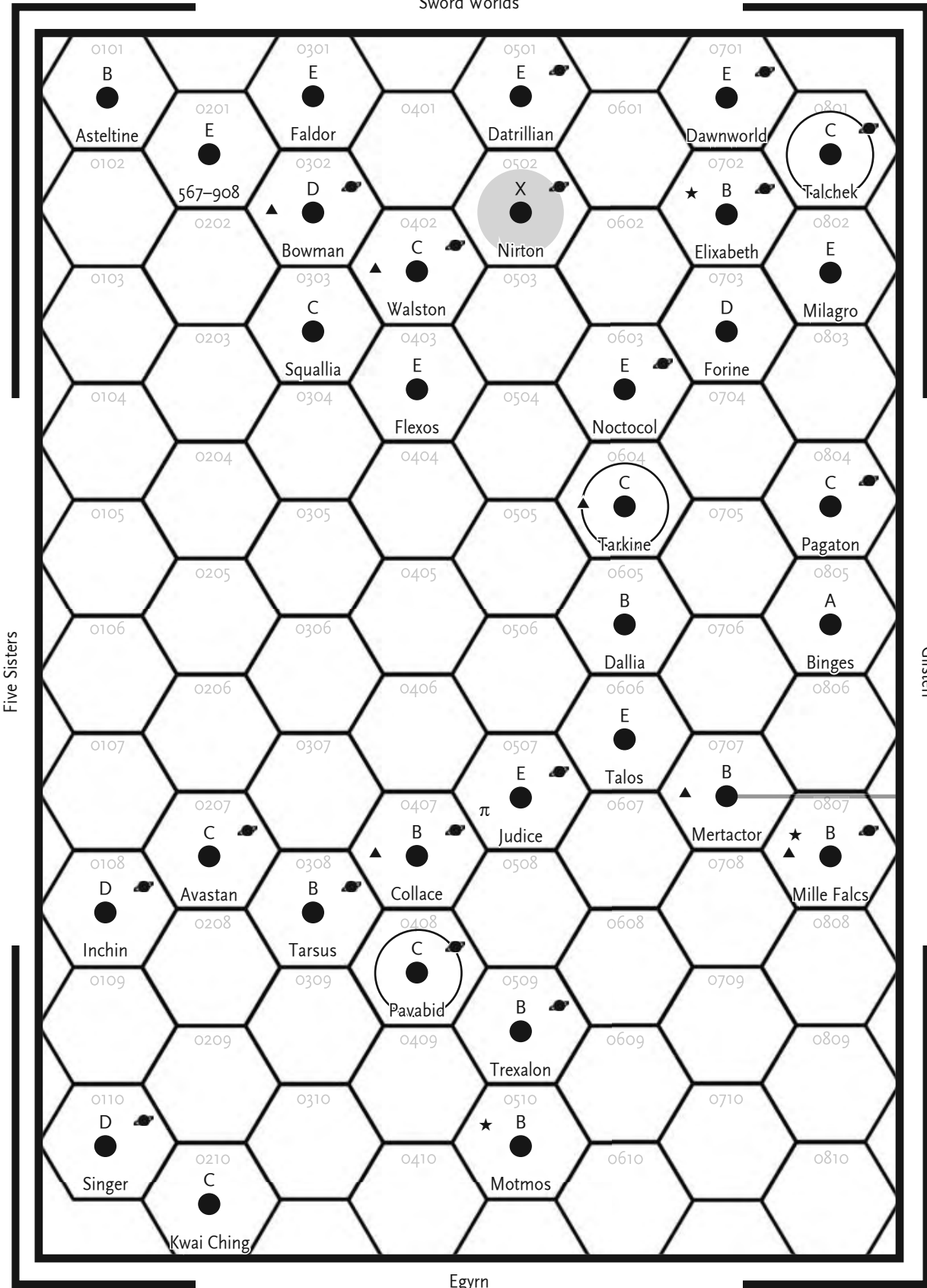
Collace in particular is interested in obtaining access to these deposits, which is strictly forbidden by Church law as offworlders are not allowed anywhere outside the trade enclave. The locals do not have the technology to extract it themselves, making it impossible for Collace or anyone else to obtain iridium from Pavabid.

Collace and Trexalon both believe that the other is engaged in underhand methods to gain access to the iridium deposits, and neither is willing to allow the other to pull off a coup like somehow gaining control of this rich new source. Since both believe that the other is willing to use covert agents on Pavabid, counter-agents must necessarily be deployed. As yet there have been no serious incidents but it is only a matter of time before the shadowy war spills over and becomes impossible for the Church not to notice. No-one can predict what might happen then.

### District 268

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Asteltine	0101 B7A7402-A	Fl NI
Inchin	0108 D12035C-A	Lo Po NI G
Singer	0110 D553774-6	Po G
567-908	0201 E532000-0	Ba
Avastan	0207 C433520-A	Po NI G
Kwai Ching	0210 C503758-A	IC
Faldor	0301 E5936A7-2	NI Lt
Bowman	0302 D000300-9 S	As Lo G
Squallia	0303 C438679-9	NI
Tarsus	0308 B584620-A	Ag Ga NI G
Walston	0402 C544338-8 C	Lo NI G
Flexos	0403 E5A1422-6	Fl NI
Collace	0407 B628943-D S	Hi Ht In G
Pavabid	0408 C6678D8-6	A G
Datrillian	0501 E227633-8	NI G
Nirton	0502 X600000-0	Ba NI R G
Judice	0507 E9B2000-0	Ba Fl IRS G
Trexalon	0509 B361851-C	Ht Ri G
Motmos	0510 B68468B-5 N	Ri Ag NI Lt
Noctocol	0603 E7A5747-6	Fl G
Tarkine	0604 C466662-7 S	Ri Ag A
Dallia	0605 B8B5883-9	Fl
Talos	0606 E333532-9	Po NI
Dawnworld	0701 E885000-0	Ba G
Elixabeth	0702 B426467-8 N	NI G
Forine	0703 D3129B8-A	Hi NA In
Mertactor	0707 B262732-B S	I
Talchek	0801 C7B1462-5	Fl NI Lt A G
Milagro	0802 E21178A-7	NA
Pagaton	0804 C769873-4	Ri Lt G
Binges	0805 A800231-A	Lo NI
Mille Falcs	0807 B9A2469-C 2	I Fl Ht NI G

Sword Worlds





# GLISTEN SUBSECTOR

Glisten subsector lies entirely within the Imperium. For many years it was a backwater lying on an unimportant frontier, and received little attention. Xboats bound for Imperial holdings in Pax Rulin subsector (to Rimward towards the Great Rift) ran through Glisten itself but otherwise there was little need to develop the region. The opening of District 268 for Imperial expansion, in 940, brought greater importance to Glisten subsector and has stimulated some investment.

Many of the worlds in the subsector lie on the Spinward Main, though the Glisten Arm is a relatively lightly travelled part of the Main. It terminates at Bendor, though a Jump-2 capable ship can reach any world in the subsector and can proceed beyond, into Trin's Veil and finally back to Mora.

Glisten is the responsibility of the 100<sup>th</sup> Fleet, with its headquarters at Glisten itself. The subsector fleet is understrength and contains mostly vessels that are small or obsolescent, or both. Its strength is further diluted by the need to patrol District 268 and to maintain a detachment there. The Sector Fleet also has a light presence in Glisten subsector; the region is a long way from the likely combat zones in a war with the Zhodani.

There are four Amber Zones in Glisten subsector and one world that, while not actually Red Zoned, has access strictly restricted. This is Mithras, an Imperial prison world. Environmental conditions are harsh, making survival outside the prison complex problematical at best. Although some prisoners are life-long exiles, there are separate areas for those serving long but finite sentences. The complex has a good rehabilitation record and a small, attached institution for the criminally insane.

Egypt is a major training base for Colonial Office personnel. Originally set up for an expected large-scale move into District 268, the facility has supported several operations elsewhere and offers a retraining service for ex-Imperial service personnel seeking to make a new life on a frontier world or in more mundane surroundings.

Glisten itself is named for the capital settlement in a system characterised by cities built in the two asteroid belts. Originally called Gliss Ten (Gliss being the name of the system's star), Glisten City arose to become the system capital and eventually the administrative centre for the subsector. There are many large cities throughout the system's belts. Most specialise to at least a certain degree in one aspect of industry or economic endeavour.

Marastan is an Imperial reserve world. Although access to the starport and associated city are unrestricted, only properly

accredited academics are permitted access to the world at large. This is because Marastan is preserved as a showcase for plant and animal species collected by the Scout Service. Some of these are now extinct in their home environment but survive on Marastan in carefully segregated reserves.

Other worlds of interest in Glisten subsector include Romar, source of 'dust-spice', a narcotic valued by the Aslan, and Melior, whose population is about 50% made up of Jonkeereen. Callia also has a significant Jonkeereen minority, numbering about 25% of the total population.

## **GLISTEN A000986 F 2**

The Glisten system is well placed to act as a communications and trade hub for the surrounding subsector; one reason why it was chosen as the subsector capital. Glisten is located at the 'wrong end' of the Spinward Main. Getting there down the Main requires a long trip meandering through several subsectors, some of which are hazardous while others are backwaters. For commercial traffic this is simply not viable, and as a means to move information it is extremely slow.

Most traffic into Glisten comes in via the Jump-2 link through Trin's Veil subsector or the Jump-3 link to Strouden in the Lunion subsector. What Jump-1 traffic there is tends to be confined to the local cluster and perhaps the nearby sections of the Main in District 268. This has created a distinct cultural region around Glisten, with its own accents and slight variations on social customs from the Imperial norm. These deviations are not great but they are noticeable to outsiders.

The Glisten system is centred on the star Gliss. It has a single gas giant and no rocky planets. There are two planetoid belts, of which one is designated as the mainworld. This belt is home to most of the system's population, who would not normally refer to themselves as Belters. That term carries with it connotations of small mining habitats and semi-nomadic prospectors whereas the people of Glisten live in large cities. The fact that their homeworld happens to be a belt does not give them any sort of kinship with Belters proper – and most 'real' Belters would agree wholeheartedly.

The population of the Glisten system numbers in the billions, housed in large cities built on asteroids all through the belt. Each city has its own administrative apparatus, all of which ultimately form part of the efficient but dull Glisten Coordinating Authority, a civil service government that runs the system as a whole. Laws are moderate but with so many settlements, housing vast numbers of people,



scattered across the entire system, a rather stodgy administration has emerged with a fair amount of red tape wrapped around almost any activity.

The capital of the system is Glisten City, a huge metropolis that grew out of the much smaller Gliss Ten settlement chosen as administrative centre for the system long ago. Glisten City is the site of the huge starport and serves as the main centre for trade and business of all kinds as well as the administrative capital. Many other cities are fairly specialised in their industrial or social activities.

There are several cities each specialising in agriculture, light and heavy industry, and even an artists' colony. However this is not taken to extremes. Almost all settlements have some industry, some food production and some technical capabilities. There are a number of more general settlements, but these are of much lesser economic importance than the great centres for trade and industry.

With its large industrial complexes and extremely high tech level, Glisten is an important exporter of technological goods across the sector and beyond. Its shipyards are widely renowned, most are located in the outer belt, named the Pluvius Belt. Among the installations there are an enormous yard owned and operated by Ling Standard Products as well as smaller and more specialised shipbuilders such as Bilstein Yards.

The Pluvius Belt is also the site of Glisten's naval base, home port of the subsector fleet. The immediate region around the base is a restricted area and is heavily patrolled, with sensor outposts constructed on a number of asteroids to give better coverage.

Glisten also has an extensive Scout base, which is located in the main belt near the starport. In addition to a huge fleet of cutters dedicated to the ongoing effort to chart and catalogue every asteroid in the belts, the base is home to the usual flotilla of communications and exploration vessels.

The Glisten system attracts large numbers of students to its academic institutions, which include the Glisten Institute of Planetological Studies (GLIPS) and the Mining School of Glisten, which is associated with GLIPS but autonomous. The Mining School receives funding from several corporate and Megacorporate sources, which offer scholarships for promising students in the prospecting, extraction, processing and management disciplines. Ex-students are recruited in large numbers by mining corporations across the sector.

There is also a community of what could be called true Belters within the system. Although not officially part of Glisten's population and not counted among it, the Belters are subject to local laws while they are in-system and most are willing to comply. However, there are groups who routinely ignore comm-channel restrictions, traffic control instructions and other governmental rules which are considered very important by the people and government of Glisten.

Enforcement of these rules is usually accompanied by howls of protest from Belter groups who claim they are being persecuted.

The situation is not, in fact, very serious. Small numbers of Belters are present at any given time and so long as they broadly comply with regulations – and stay out of the most populous areas – they are allowed to more or less do as they please. There are simply not enough of them to be a problem and most of their activity is in remote corners of the belt anyway. Only those making a real nuisance of themselves attract the attention of law enforcement or the navy.

For the Belters' part, most are just trying to make their way in the universe with a little prospecting or working a claim on some outsystem asteroid. The shiny cities of the main belt are built on asteroids but the people who live there are no more Belters than planetsiders are – the Belters have nothing in common with them and are happy to just go their own way.

## **CRAW** **C573645** **3**

Craw is located 3 parsecs from Glisten. It is on the Spinward Main but is not really on the way to anywhere, nor is it of much commercial interest except as a market for mid-tech goods.

Craw is very dry. Much of the surface is desert or rocky badlands, with the only large body of water a sea at the north pole. Away from the seacoasts, the terrain varies from classic sand deserts complete with dunes, through broken rocky regions to mountainous areas, some with active volcanoes. None of these regions receives much in the way of rainfall and average temperatures are high. This accounts for the general lack of plant life in most regions. What there is tends to be tough and wiry, and particularly unattractive.

Although Craw is a fairly small world it is of above-average density and maintains a standard-pressure atmosphere. However, as a result of the lack of plant life there is relatively little oxygen in the air. It is still possible to breathe unassisted, but humans who are not accustomed to the environment find it uncomfortable, tire easily, and sometimes suffer from the effects of altitude sickness. Filter masks are not necessary. Indeed, they are of no real benefit as it is not airborne particles that makes the atmosphere difficult to breathe but the lack of oxygen. An oxygen mask is necessary if offworlders want to operate normally without several weeks of acclimatisation.

Despite its unappealing nature, Craw is home to some seven million or so humans. About two-thirds of the population live around the shores of the polar sea; the remainder dwell in settlements of moderate size all across the globe where water can be found. Government is by a democratic system of representation, though the difficulty of communicating or travelling over long distances means that outlying areas are not properly represented and are in some ways more or less autonomous.



The humans on Craw are descended from the early colonists who came to set up a home and exploit Craw's mineral resources. The mission was not a great success and due to a number of factors the colony went through a survival/subsistence phase that lasted for centuries before finally beginning to recover. Today, as a backwater world with little in the way of exports to pay for imported technology, the people of Craw have a long way to go in order to build themselves a technological society.

A major factor in the local economy is the use of native labour. Craw is home to tribes of intelligent humanoids whose considerable numbers are not counted as part of the world population. These natives are well adapted to the local conditions and can function better than even an acclimatised human, making them an ideal source of agricultural and heavy labour. The tribes that live far from humans have a primitive tech level 1 society, while those with human contact are generally capable of maintaining TL2.

The tribes close to human settlements are dominated by them to the point where natives serve as sepoy in an army that serves mainly to keep down the local tribes and impose a condition not far short of slavery on them. Native workers (some come right out and call them slaves) are subject to very strict restrictions as they labour for the benefit of the human population. This has led to a state of near-constant conflict between the human population and their 'allied' natives, versus the 'wild' natives who have greater numbers but lower-tech equipment.

Slavery is of course illegal in the Imperium, but there has been no Imperial intervention. One reason for this is that demolishing the current system on Craw would mean that the human population would need to be evacuated or else would either starve or be killed by the enraged natives. If evacuated, where would they go?

There is also the fact that the situation is dark grey rather than black; the native workers are not quite slaves, though they are definitely third-class citizens. There is also the factor that the native workers that serve the human population are provided by their own tribes which are dominated by the humans but not quite enslaved.

A number of Imperial activists (some would call them do-gooders in a disparaging tone) have arrived on Craw recently to investigate the situation and report on what they see as shameful exploitation of the native population. These activists have a difficult task ahead. The human population resent them, the wild natives will kill them like any other human, and even if they succeed they must then convince an Imperial agency to act on behalf of the natives. As a result no great changes can be expected any time soon.

There is another offworld group on Craw whose welcome is warmer in some quarters. A team from a mid-sized mineral company, InStarSpec, has recently set up a base of operations at Craw Starport, incidentally upgrading it to C status. The installation is secured by InStarSpec mercenaries armed with good offworld weapons.

InStarSpec has set up a handful of small mineral extraction bases and exports what they produce via the port, paying the locals a fee for the privilege. While very modest, this fee represents hard cash that can be invested by the world government. As the InStarSpec operation expands, the locals will be able to invest more in bringing offworld technology to Craw. Already the port town is a strange mix of local and imported technology, mainly bought from TL5-7 worlds.

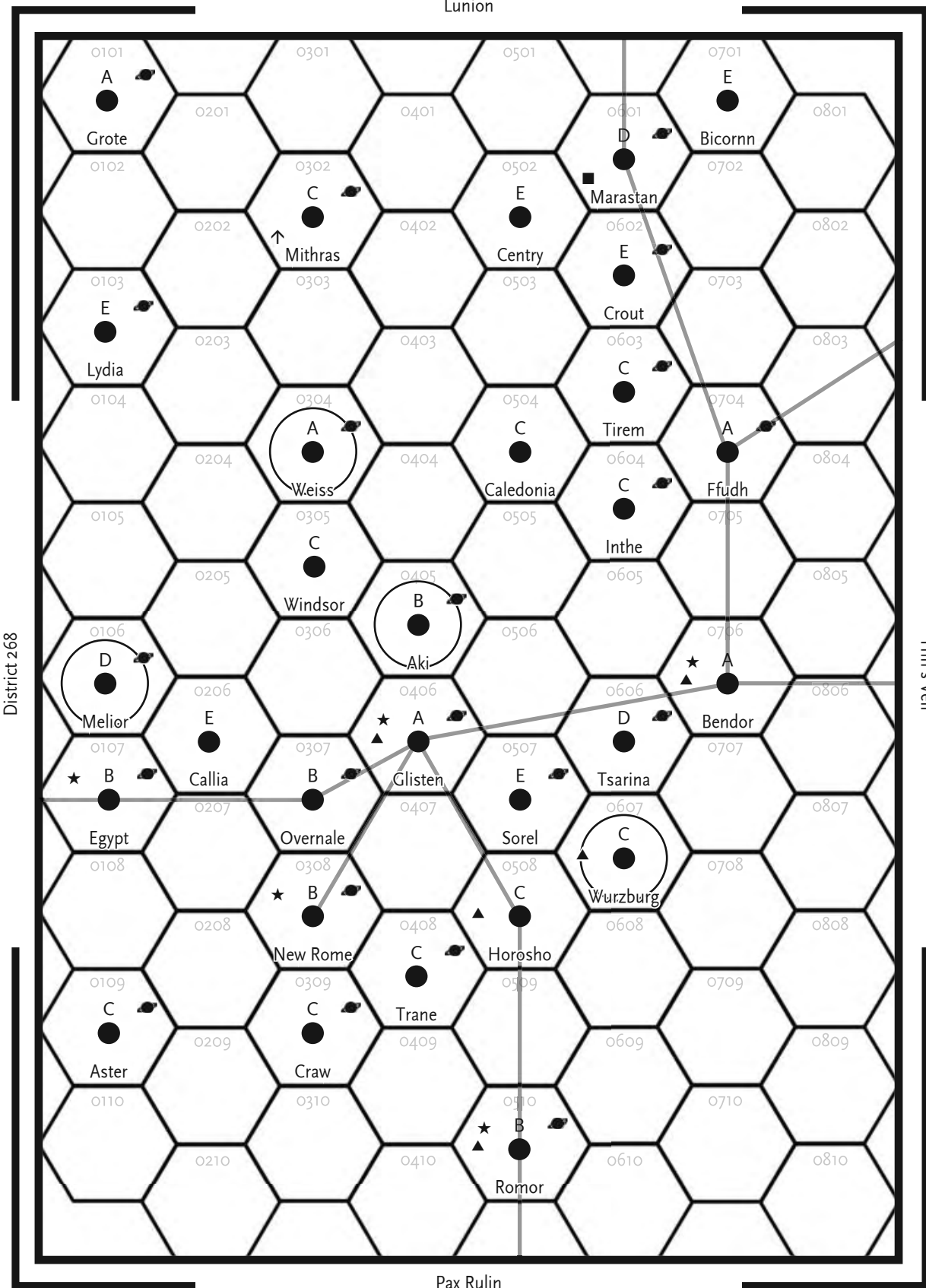
In addition to the single merchant vessel chartered by InStarSpec to run between Craw and Glisten, other ships are beginning to trickle in and there are hopes that more regular trade may follow. Time will tell whether Craw becomes a great success story built on a partnership of local government and offworld mining corporation, with a little bit of slave-labour thrown in, or whether the corporation ends up running the world – locals, natives and all.

### ***Glisten Subsector***

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Grote	0101 A400404-B	I NI G
Lydia	0103 E110430-6	I NI G
Melior	0106 D140466-7	I Po NI De A G
Egypt	0107 BAC6567-7 N	I Fl NI G
Aster	0109 C86A410-9	I NI Wa G
Callia	0206 E150852-6	I Po De
Mithras	0302 C8B5546-6	I Fl NI IP G
Weiss	0304 A626464-B	I NI A G
Windsor	0305 C783511-9	I NI
Overnale	0307 B45467A-9	I Ag NI G
New Rome	0308 B837866-B N	I G
Craw	0309 C573645-3	I NI Lt G
Aki	0405 B443987-9	I Hi Po NI A G
Glisten	0406 A000986-F 2	I Hi Ht As Cap G
Trane	0408 C639422-B	I NI G
Centry	0502 E222447-6	I Po NI
Caledonia	0504 C541636-5	I Po NI Lt
Sorel	0507 E48569A-2	I Ri Ag NI Lt G
Horosho	0508 C3378A6-A S	I
Romar	0510 B450456-8 2	I Po NI De G
Marastan	0601 D868772-5	I IR Lt G
Crout	0602 E4359CA-7	I Hi G
Tirem	0603 C7B5975-B	I Fl Hi G
Inthe	0604 C100598-B	I NI G
Tsarina	0606 D120636-5	I Po NI NA Lt G
Wurzberg	0607 C795300-A S	I Lo NI A
Bicornn	0701 E563576-2	I NI Lt
Ffudn	0704 A41489D-C	I Ht G
Bendor	0706 A756656-C 2	I Ht Ag Ga NI



Lunion



District 268

Trin's Veil

Pax Rulin



# TRIN'S VEIL SUBSECTOR

The Trin's Veil subsector gets its name from the reflective debris cloud that surrounds Trin, the subsector capital. This is the remains of a shattered moon, and makes the night-time view on Trin a glorious sight. It also interferes somewhat with navigation close to the world.

The subsector is entirely within the Imperium and backs onto Gulf subsector of Deneb sector to Trailing. Although the Spinward Main does not run through Trin's Veil, a Jump-2 ship can connect to it at Hexos (in Mora subsector) or Bendor (in Glisten) after a simple transit via the Palique, Katarulu and Dodds clusters. Jump-2 is also required to reach Trin itself. However, trade is conducted on a large scale within the subsector's two main star clusters using Jump-1 ships.

Trin's Veil subsector is the responsibility of the 207<sup>th</sup> Fleet which, like the 100<sup>th</sup> in Glisten, is somewhat understrength. Patrols are maintained from the fleet headquarters at Katarulu and from bases on Murchison and Trin. The Sector Fleet maintains a reserve at Trin but this is a battle-reserve and rarely has vessels available for patrol work.

There is one Red Zone in the subsector (Zephyr) and one Amber Zone (Hazel). Thisbe is not amber zoned but can upon occasion be dangerous. A long-term project is underway to improve the world's marginal atmosphere and hydrographics by bringing in ice asteroids from the outsystem. Most are simply broken into small chunks and set in a decaying orbit that will cause them to burn up in what little atmosphere there is, adding to it. A few fragments do reach the ground, potentially causing a hazard.

The world of Prilissa is the origin of the Kian, a large flightless bird used as a beast of burden on many worlds and as ceremonial mounts for the Imperial Household Cavalry. Kian fulfil many of the same functions as horses and have been exported almost as widely.

## **ARAMIS B659772 6**

There are two worlds named Aramis in the Spinward Marches. Aramis/Aramis (ie the world named Aramis in the subsector also named Aramis) is an important trade centre and naval base. 'The Other Aramis', ie Aramis/Trin's Veil, is in many ways an opposite.

Aramis/Trin's Veil possesses something that its more prosperous namesake does not, however, in the form of a habitable 'shirtsleeves' environment. Gravity is slightly lighter than Terra-normal and the air is quite thin. This is not a major problem, but unacclimatised visitors tire quickly and can become light-headed from quite moderate

activity. To offset this, most ships approaching Aramis gradually lower their internal air pressure during the week in Jump. Thus most starfarers arrive already acclimatised to the local conditions. While not perfect, this system enables visitors to avoid serious effects.

Aramis is a very wet world, with extensive oceans and relatively little useable land. Nevertheless this is more than enough for the population, which numbers in the tens of millions. There is one moderately sized continent and many large islands or archipelagos. Most of the latter have their own small nations which vary considerably in terms of government and characteristics but mostly conform to a tech level of 5-6.

One 'island nation' is in fact an industrial enclave on long-term lease to Peabody Instrument, a firm specialising in the manufacture of scientific apparatus and instrumentation components for vehicles and industrial applications. The Peabody enclave has a large population – fully half a million people – and is also the site of the starport. Many visitors to Aramis gain the impression that it is a high-tech industrialised world. In fact, beyond the shores of the Peabody enclave, which takes up the entire mass of a large island, Aramis is a mess of small mid-tech societies.

The mainland is home to the majority of the population. There are several states along the coastal strip, mostly known as 'claves (corrupted from enclave) and usually named for their founders. These are independent and often unfriendly if not downright hostile to one another. Each 'clave consists of a few small towns or a couple of larger ones, surrounded by an area of villages and farms.

Inland is a wide outback region which is thinly populated and has no formal government. Most outbackers live in steads which are protected by a simple earth rampart with firing positions cut in it. Raids and feuds are not uncommon, and the outbacker towns are similarly protected. As a general rule outbackers do not like coasters (or 'clavers as they are sometimes known) and have little contact with them. There is some trade between the coasters and the outbackers, just as there is some trade between different 'claves. For the most part, wary, armed mistrust is the order of the day as a result of old feuds.

From time to time the 'claves come into conflict, usually over a disputed border region or a resource-rich area. Similarly the 'claves will sometimes drive nearby outbackers off their land, either in order to seize their resources or to improve the security of the region. Hostility between the coasters and the outbackers probably began in this way, though the origins of the many disputes and grudges are in many cases long forgotten.

Naturally the various 'claves are entirely willing to use the outbackers against one another, either by inciting a group of outbackers to harass another 'clave or by raising units of irregular troops from among the outbackers for a more direct confrontation. This has served to ensure that the cycle of violence and mistrust is not broken.

Most of Aramis is tense but not especially dangerous at any one time. Offworlders are generally recognised as not involved in the many feuds and other conflicts going on at any given time, and may be offered courteous hospitality amid what amounts to a war zone. Of course, there are those who would like to engineer a situation where their rivals inadvertently killed offworlders but for the most part visitors are more likely to be seen as potentially useful contacts or honoured guests. There is a strong tradition of hospitality towards those you are not actively feuding against in Aramis.

Offworlders are, however, not all that common outside the Peabody Enclave. Aramis is off the beaten track as far as interstellar commerce goes, and although the Peabody installation has a fair amount of high-tech manufacturing equipment this is used for its own business applications and is not available to generate trade goods for the world in general.

Exports from the various 'claves and island nations are modest in quantity and constructed at tech level 6, making it difficult to bring in much offworld cash. Those 'claves and nations that can find something offworlders want, and who invest the proceeds wisely, will eventually leave their rivals behind or absorb them.

## **TRIN      A894A96      F      2**

Colonised not long after Mora, Trin is viewed by some as the 'back door to the Marches'. It can be reached from Deneb sector by an easy Jump-2 route through well-developed worlds with good ports in Gulf subsector. This creates a lucrative trade run into Trin, from where it is possible to head Coreward and join the Spinward Main or Spinward towards Glisten.

Large quantities of goods move through Trin's excellent Highport, which has many brokerages and commercial dispute resolution firms. Most ships are larger types; corporate freighters and liners rather than small, privately-owned ships, but Trin's shipyards are used for refits by many smaller operators – at least, the ones that can afford the fees.

Trin Highport also hosts a very large independent merchant academy, the Imperial Trin Institute of Commerce (ITIC). ITIC trains merchant spacer crews, but also offers courses in related areas such as brokerage and business law. Many of the personnel on the 'spacer' side of the institute also undertake Naval Reservist training at the Imperial Navy base in the system.

As already noted, the Imperial Navy has a base in the Trin system which serves as headquarters for the subsector fleet and a base for heavy squadrons of the Sector Fleet. Trin's system defences are commanded from a ground installation on Trin itself, but many of the system defence vessels berth at the naval base. Trin also has a small scout base to serve the communications network.

There is one other major facility in the Trin system, the world of Ling Standard Products Spinward. This rockball world was named for the corporate facility built on it in the early years of corporate expansion into the area. Originally planned to take over as regional headquarters from the facility at Mora, it instead became a manufacturing site with a sideline in researching improved industrial techniques.

Trin itself is a medium-sized world with a dense, tainted atmosphere and relatively low water coverage. There are no moons, though Trin had one at some time in the past. The cloud of reflective debris that makes dawn and sunset so spectacular on Trin is the remnant of this satellite, which presumably broke up due to gravitational stresses.

The world's population numbers in tens of billions. As with many very high population worlds, Trin's people are concentrated in very large cities surrounded by agricultural areas. Even with such a large population, there is plenty of land and well-regulated agriculture using high-technology methods is quite capable of feeding Trin's billions without resorting to bulk food imports or low-quality subsistence rations. Indeed, Trin is a strong contender for one of the best places to live in Charted Space.

The cities are not especially crowded, and are very well-designed by a civilisation that has had gravitic transportation since the world was colonised. Buildings are characteristically tall, with wide spaces between them filled with parks and recreation facilities. Most Trin residents are used to thinking in three dimensions when getting about; the idea of being stuck at ground level is foreign to them.

Ground vehicles are not common on Trin, other than for industrial and agricultural use, and for mobility within large buildings. Getting around in the city normally involves fast, efficient maglev trains or grav buses plying between landing areas on the outside of the buildings. Maglev rail lines link the cities, along with high-speed grav vehicles for those in a hurry.

The general populace are well educated as well as enjoying a very high quality of life. Upward mobility is available through promotions at work as normal, but for those of a different bent it is possible to obtain government sponsorship (equivalent to an appropriate salary) for excellence or merely promise in areas as diverse as art, writing, music and sport.





There are poor people on Trin, of course, but there is a highly effective social safety net in place which is normally sufficient to allow anyone who has genuinely fallen on hard times rather than wanting to be a career bum to start climbing back to relative prosperity. Being flat broke on Trin is not quite the same as being down and out on some frontier world or mid-tech industrial hellhole.

Trin's effective and efficient social system tends to produce motivated and skilled people. Coupled with a tech level as high as anywhere in the Imperium, this has made Trin an industrial powerhouse whose goods are exported across the sector and far beyond. That in turn generates a level of wealth only dreamed of on many worlds.

Trin's government is fairly typical of high-population worlds, in that it has a semi-corporate, bureaucratic structure that follows established practices for the most part. Stability is considered very important in most areas of governance – Trin is so far ahead of the pack that reckless growth is undesirable and carries a risk of damaging the world's enviable position as one of the best and richest places to live this side of the Imperial Core. Trin has it good, and prefers to play safe to ensure things stay that way.

However, Trin is an economic centre, and her government understands that flexibility and rapid responses to a changing situation are necessary for success in commerce. Calculated risks are entirely acceptable, so long as there is always enough in reserve to cover a loss and nothing is ventured that cannot be done without. Cautious speculation is the order of the day in the economic arena and other areas, such as scientific research, as well.

This innate caution has, oddly enough, prompted the government of Trin to invest in some very unlikely scientific projects, economic investments and exploratory missions. If there is a risk that someone else might make a big score out of a project and that Trin might miss out, then the government is willing to invest a little in it, just in case it pays off. This attitude puzzles some outsiders, but it makes sense to those who grew up in Trin society. They explain that 'When you're rich, you can afford to throw a little money into blue-sky projects. If it's a bust, nothing is really lost. But once in a while you get lucky.'

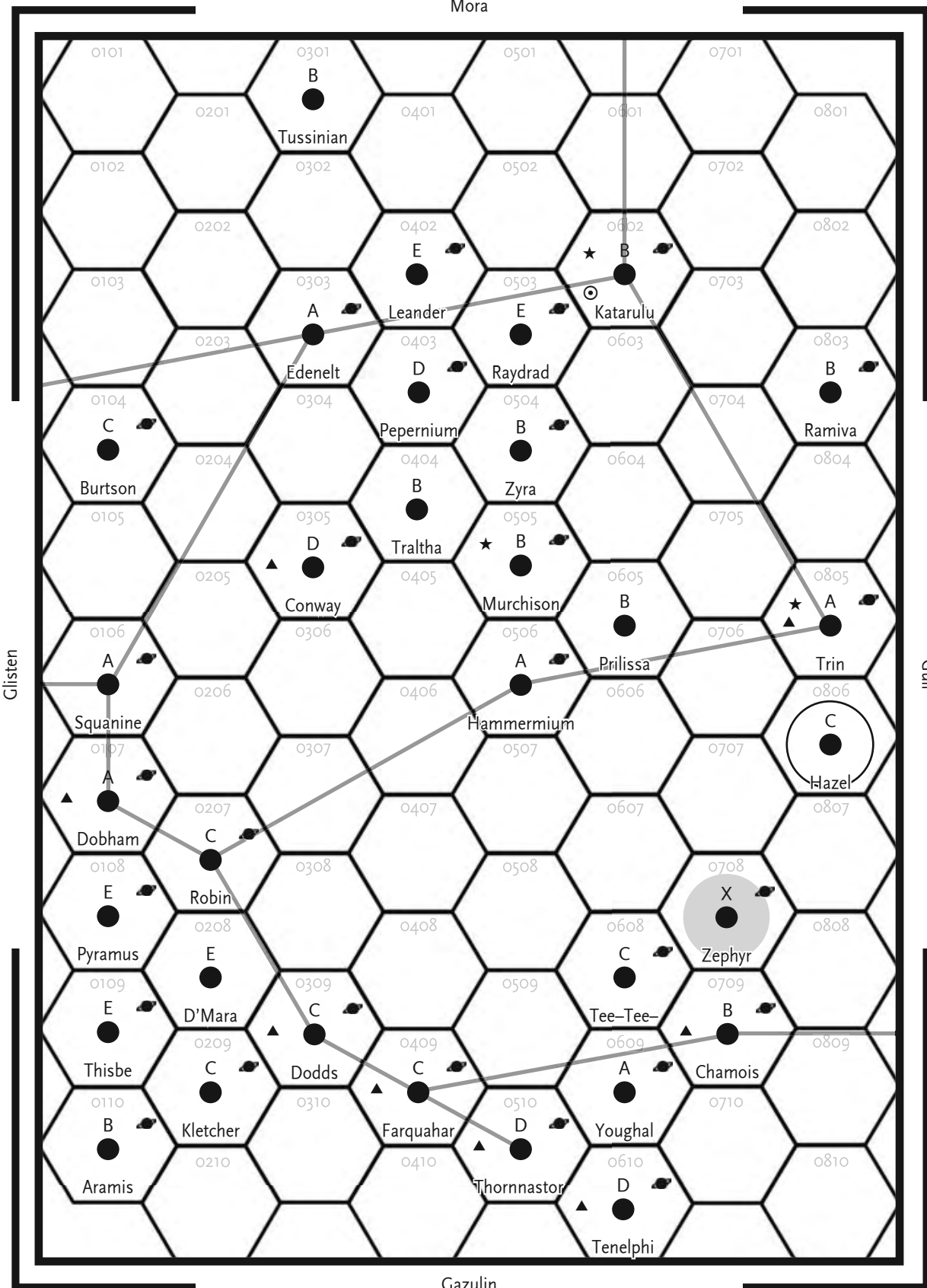
This means that it is often possible to get a small investment out of the government of Trin for any project that already has someone else's backing and looks like a reasonable prospect. The concept is semi-seriously referred to as 'insurance against someone else's success'.

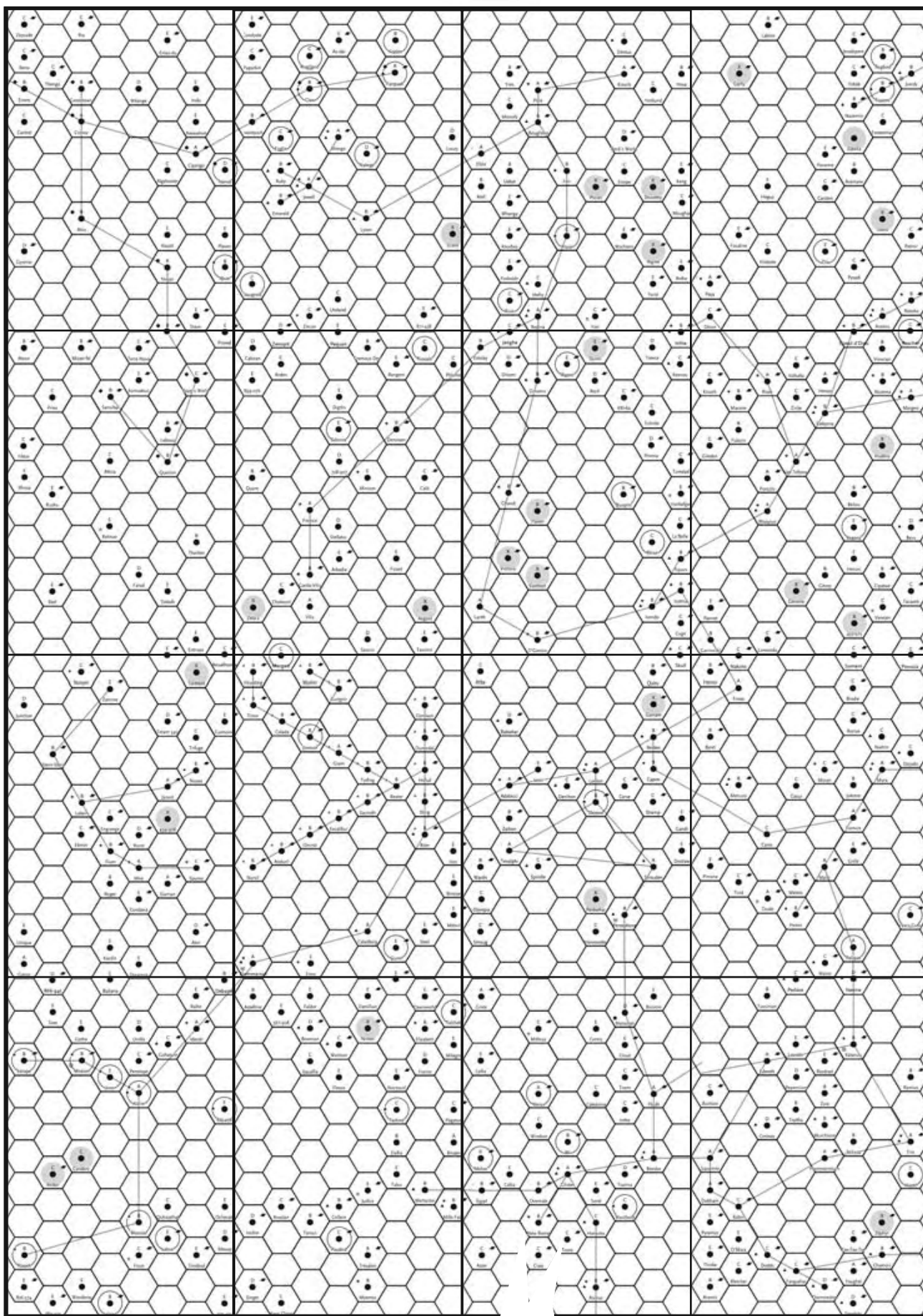
### Trin's Veil Subsector

Name	Statistics	Remarks
Burtson	0104 C462667-8	I Ri NI G
Squanine	0106 A300550-B	I NI G
Dobham	0107 A450457-A S	I Po NI De G
Pyramus	0108 E566335-2	I Lo NI Lt G
Thisbe	0109 E4305AD-5	I Po NI De G
Aramis	0110 B659772-6	I NI G
Robin	0207 C00059C-C	I Ht As G
D'Mara	0208 E75A798-5	I Wa Lt
Kletcher	0209 C525567-9	I NI G
Tussinian	0301 B678324-7	I Lo NI
Edenelt	0303 A4638BD-B	I G
Conway	0305 D894586-7 S	I Ag Ga NI G
Dodds	0309 C4439DF-7 S	I Hi Po NI G
Leander	0402 E695244-5	I Lo NI Lt G
Pepernum	0403 D567530-3	I Ag Ga NI Lt G
Traltha	0404 B790630-6	I NI De
Farquahar	0409 C625563-7 S	I NI G
Raydrad	0503 E99367A-6	I NI G
Zyra	0504 B555448-7	I NI G
Murchison	0505 B544433-6 N	I NI G
Hammermium	0506 A5525AB-B	I Po NI G
Thornnastor	0510 D534443-8 S	I NI G
Katarulu	0602 B252665-B N	I Po IWS G
Prilissa	0605 B985588-6	I Ag Ga NI
Tee-Tee-Tee	0608 C110530-9	I NI G
Youghal	0609 AA95365-B	I NI G
Tenelphi	0610 D76A579-9 S	I NI Wa G
Zephyr	0708 X89556A-3	I Ag Ga NI Lt R G
Chamois	0709 B544642-5 S	I Ag Ga NI Lt G
Ramiva	0803 B1107A7-8	I NA G
Trin	0805 A894A96-F 2	I Hi Ht In Cap G
Hazel	0806 C645747-5	I Ag Ga Lt A



Mora





# ADVENTURING IN THE SPINWARD MARCHES

## TRAVELLER ADVENTURES

The Spinward Marches setting has been the backdrop for Traveller adventures for three decades and still has plenty of scope for more. With a little bit of imagination, the possibilities for adventure within the Marches is limitless.

Many adventures fall into one of several general types, some of which are uniquely 'Traveller' whilst others are more generic. Exactly what 'feels right' to any given Referee or group of players can vary considerably. Some adventure types are outside the usual Traveller experience and may jar with the setting as it is perceived by many players. This does not mean that playing a game of this type is somehow prohibited; the whole point of roleplaying games is that they can be tailored to the preferences of each group of players.

Thus, what is written here is in no way a prohibition on any type or style of play. It represents a set of guidelines to illustrate how the mainstream Traveller universe looks, feels and responds to player actions. However, the only really useful rule is – if it is fun and you are happy with it, do it.

### **Motivation, Science and Technology**

Although Traveller has starships, FTL travel and psionic powers, it is basically a 'hard science' setting. This means that there should be a reason for everything, even if that reason is unknown or even incomprehensible to the players.

Where the motivation of non-player characters, even very alien ones, follow some kind of logic, the setting becomes that much richer and more believable. This does not mean that the players will understand everything that happens, nor that the Referee needs to have detailed notes on every character's personality. However, the game universe needs to be sufficiently consistent that odd behaviour attracts interest.

For example, if a Non Player Character suddenly becomes violent when asked a certain question, that should provoke the adventurers to wonder why. In a consistent game universe such an event would be unusual, but if Non Player Characters behave in an unpredictable manner all the time, there may be nothing to indicate that this event is significant.

Of course, the characters may never find out why their Droyne acquaintance suddenly stops in the middle of the street and began to emit a weird keening sound while performing some kind of slow-motion dance. Droyne often display behaviour that seems odd to outsiders and they rarely explain themselves. The Referee does

not need to worry about exactly why the Droyne behaves like this unless it is relevant to the storyline – it is a piece of colour detail that serves to remind everyone that Droyne are different to humans. The important thing is that the rest of the universe is consistent enough that the players are willing to believe that there is a reason.

Note that bizarre alien behaviour still needs to make some kind of sense, even if the reasons for it are unknown. A Droyne stopping in the middle of the road, oblivious to traffic and other hazards, is ignoring its survival instincts. That suggests that something significant is occurring. Aliens that do odd things from time to time are believable. Aliens that randomly self-immolate just because they are weird and alien are not.

The same goes for science and technology. Although high technology may bend the rules of physics as we know them, generally speaking there needs to be a certain level of consistency in the game universe in order to make it both believable and possible to make plans in.

Thus, as an example, unless an artificial gravity field is in use, gravity should always work as advertised. Planets and moons will follow predictable orbits. This means that when a ship's sensors pick up an asteroid in an orbit that cannot possibly exist naturally, the players know that something odd is going on.

This also makes it possible to use logic and good planning to assist raw die rolls. If the characters are searching for a lost scout vessel and find an asteroid that is off its normal path, a smart player may conclude that it has been disturbed by a collision and decide to check the charts for the asteroid's normal orbit and match its current path with that orbit. The difference will be due to the collision and that will give the characters a starting point for their search, as their ship's computer should be able to model possible collision parameters and suggest possible vectors for the wreck to have bounced off at.

This is an example of the use of logic to solve an in-game puzzle, or at least gain a clue. It is of course entirely possible to use a simple make-a-skill-roll approach to this sort of search, but the successful application of logical thought is more satisfying for the players and, arguably, what hard-science games are all about.

Certain kinds of technology are usually downplayed in Traveller. These include, but are not limited to, cybertechnology and neural/physical enhancements, nanotechnology and 'magical' technologies like hard holograms. The latter might be possible at extremely high technologies but for the most part Traveller takes the view that

holograms are just light. You can see them, and hear the sounds that go with them, but you cannot create an artificial world with them. This varies from Referee to Referee of course. Some like the idea of holo-adventures; others do not.

The same goes for force fields and related technologies. High technology levels in Traveller do permit repulsor and, eventually, tractor beam units but there are no personal force fields or similar items common in many other science fiction settings. These things can make life a bit too easy for adventurers, and nobody wants that. Even psionic teleportation, rare as it is, has severe restrictions regarding how far a character can go with it.

This means that instead of teleporting from place to place, slapping forcefields over hull breaches or using them to contain intruders, and sticking a tractor beam on a distressed vessel to pull it to safety, Traveller characters have to do everything the hard way. Ground to orbit travel is by shuttle or landing the ship. Boarders are repelled with guns and blades. Hull breaches are manually patched while the air blasts out around your ears. And if you want to tow something, you have to go over there and manually attach a line.

This is a good thing. Traveller is about 'people doing stuff'. Traveller adventures should centre on the characters, not the technology they use. Anyone can push a button and tractor the distressed shuttle to safety or build a gizmo to fix the escaped nuclear particle problem in engineering. It takes a hero to don a vacc suit and leap across the gap to haul the crew out of their wrecked shuttle, or to climb carefully past the venting coolant pipes as the radiation counter creeps towards a lethal dose.

As to cybertech and nanotechnology, the general assumption is that they are present but not the focus of an adventure. A given Referee's Traveller universe may make use of neural jacking and cyberware, but once again it is far less interesting to jack into a computer system from a motel somewhere and obtain the necessary information than to creep into a hostile area and physically access the computers there.

Nanotechnology is also best downplayed, as it can result in a rather dull game universe, or at least one where the characters are not captains of their own fate. A short-term nanotech virus shield that allows characters to enter a quarantine zone to perform their mission sounds like a useful plot device, and incidentally imposes a 'clock' on the characters. Total immunity to disease due to nanotech, or the ability to gulp down nanotech 'healing potions' to quick-fix combat damage are outside the mainstream Traveller experience. That is not to say that your games cannot run like that, merely that the baseline Traveller universe does not use these things.

Apart from anything else, some technologies make the setting less fun. There is no need to undertake interstellar commerce if anything needed can be easily produced by nanites. Characters can become more or less redundant in a universe where their ship is fixed by

nanobots every time they crash it or get shot at, or where the super-smart ship's computer can handle the crew's jobs. What is left for the characters to do in such a universe? They will find something, no doubt, but a universe where people have to do things for themselves has so many more opportunities for adventure.

### ***Worlds as Adventure Settings***

Spinward Marches sector contains over 400 star systems. Each of them has a mainworld with its own characteristics, and while it is possible for two mainworlds to have the same UWP code, these two planets will not actually be identical.

The UWP code is merely a starting point. Two worlds with the same size, atmosphere and hydrographics codes can still be very different from one another. Slight variations in orbital eccentricity or distance can create very different conditions on-planet. One might be a garden world while the other is hammered by raging storms on a regular basis.

However, even within a given world there will be considerable variance. Only in Hollywood are there desert worlds, forest worlds, ice planets and so forth. Most worlds will have a range of terrain with mountains, plains and swampy areas being present even on a heavily forested world. A desert planet is unlikely to be 100% dry. There may be oases, regions of scrubby semi-desert and the like. Similarly a water world may be totally covered by water, but is likely to have some islands and even small continents poking up above the surface.

The general characteristics of a planet are only a guideline. However, much can be inferred from these characteristics. On a world with a thin atmosphere, erosion due to wind effects will not be so great, which might lead to higher or sharper-edged mountains than somewhere with denser air. Less erosion means less particles to form part of the soil, which could imply a less fertile world than might otherwise be the case. Vegetation might be taller and more slender if there is less air movement to drag at large plants. This is even more likely if the world has lower than standard gravity, which is generally the case with smaller worlds.

Much the same comments apply to the social characteristics of a UWP (Population, government and law level). One democracy is not necessarily like another, for example. Note that the government code is simply the one that best fit, chosen from a list by a survey team and possibly not updated in a very long time. Even when the code is accurate, it may be misleading.

For example, travellers may visit a world listed as a dictatorship, to find that in fact the 'dictator' is in fact a figurehead monarch who carries out state functions and ratifies the democratically elected government as a nicety of law. Although the world calls itself a kingdom and has an actual king, leading the survey team to enter it in the database as a dictatorship, it does not function as one.



This works the other way around, too. What is theoretically a republic might be a dictatorship in all but name, or might have such a restricted voting class that it is more of an oligarchy than a democratic state. Until the travellers have visited a world and lived amongst its people they will not really understand how its society works and will miss the more subtle nuances.

As a general rule higher law levels tend to be associated with police states and other oppressive societies, however this is not always the case. Some democratic and very pleasant societies have immense bodies of law and regulations for virtually everything. Nor does the amount of restrictions in place entirely indicate the level of enforcement. On some high-law worlds many infractions are routinely ignored or are enforced in a patchy fashion by overworked or corrupt police forces.

Low law level generally indicates that there are not many restrictions in place, but it could be that those few that exist all carry huge penalties. Zero law is not the same thing as tolerance for any kind of behaviour. People are not suicidally stupid; they may have no laws against people marching down the main street in powered armour armed with advanced military weapons, but if it seems likely that someone is going to start randomly shooting people or taking property away from others ('It's not stealing if there's no law, right?') then they may encounter a very robust response.



Zero law can occur in different ways and mean entirely different things. Some places are genuine and voluntary anarchies or are frontier societies with no formal law or enforcement system. In such places it may well be accepted that nobody has a right to give orders to anyone else. However, most such places have a 'code' of some kind and this normally includes respect for property and other people. Going outside the range of acceptable behaviour may not be illegal but it may result in the whole town turning against the character, running him out of town at gunpoint if he is lucky.

Alternatively, law and order might have broken down, in which case there normally will be an unofficial system in place, amounting to gun law – those with the most and best-armed followers can dictate what others may or may not do. Such places tend to be dangerous but are ultimately self-correcting in many cases. Whoever emerges on top in the lawless period will usually set some rules and in time this becomes the new body of law, however rough and ready it may be.

A world's population digit gives an indication of the amount of people on a planet, but little more than that. It is not possible to tell from a UWP code how the population is distributed. A population in the tens of millions is normally required for a significant industrial base if it is distributed over a reasonable area. However, a world with half a million people living in the immediate area of the starport, and virtually no-one else on the entire rest of the planet, could support a reasonable amount of industry and perhaps make some money on exports.

On the other hand, a hundred million people living in scattered villages all across the planetary surface would not be able to produce much, nor undertake large-scale projects. However, they would not usually need to; local craftsmen should be sufficient to keep a small town running. Only when large numbers of people begin to concentrate in one place are great works needed.

The population code is to some extent a guideline only. It normally lists only the permanent population. Transient workers, the personnel and dependants of an offworld-run Starport or an Imperial base, and similar non-permanent residents, are not counted for purposes of the UWP listing. Nor, sometimes, are the members of a minor race sharing the world with the listed population.

There may also be other groups either missed by the survey or not significant enough to include. A population of even a few hundred million people will not entirely fill up a planet, and there may be small populations in remote areas. These could be anything: dissidents, a corporate mining operation, a religious group seeking seclusion, unlicensed colonists carving out a home for themselves or anything else the Referee wants to use.

Thus it is possible to set many different adventures on a world, often in very different circumstances. On 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Terra, it would be possible to become involved with the seedy underworld of an industrial city, undertake archaeological work in an unpopulated



outback region, search for ruins in a rain forest, rescue the crew of a sinking nautical vessel, explore the ice caps, become involved in the struggles of outback farmers, fight in a war between rival factions in a previously civilised area, and to have all manner of other adventures, each in a different setting.

There is a tendency among players to be blinded by the UWP, and to treat each dot on the star system hex map as a single location. Many times adventurers visit a world and have an adventure there, then move on thinking they have 'done' that world. To do so is to miss out on the vast potential that each star system offers. There is, after all, only so much information that can be conveyed by a UWP code and the closer the adventurers get to something, the more detail emerges.

A UWP code or a three-line guidebook entry is sufficient to get an overview of a place from a couple of parsecs away, but it is not until the place is fleshed out by the Referee and experienced by the players that its true character begins to emerge.

### ***Star Systems As Adventure Settings***

The mainworld, varied as it is as an adventure setting, is not the only possible one. The whole of the star system can be used.

There will generally only be one habitable world in any given system, and that world will dominate the immediate area around it if orbital craft or space vessels are available. Thus any moons of the mainworld, as well as orbital stations and the Highport, if any, will be closely associated with the mainworld. Commercial and scientific installations, mining colonies, military bases and similar facilities are likely to be set up on a world's moons. It is not uncommon to mount tracking stations and missile or other weapon platforms on a moon.

However, further out in the system, different conditions apply. Gas giants, if any are present, may have several moons that can be colonised. There may be one or more planetoid belts, and the presence of rocky planets is likely in most systems. Each of these places can be home to an installation of some kind, and can be an adventure setting even if there is no population.

High-technology mainworlds with an extensive system defence flotilla tend to control their entire system, with colonies and outposts on the various bodies. Lower-tech worlds not only cannot colonise these bodies, but are unable to stop anyone else from doing so. Thus there may be populations of Belters and/or corporate mining vessels working a belt or the moons of a gas giant. A rocky planet or a moon could be home to an entirely separate culture from that of the mainworld, or could be the site of a base owned and operated by the Imperial military or a Megacorporation.

Other installations are also possible, such as independent freeports set up deep in the outsystem. Corsair bases or secret research installations may be concealed in a planetoid belt or out in the Oort Cloud, the shell of planetoids and comets that surrounds many star systems at truly vast distances.

Even without a current population, a moon or asteroid could be the site for an adventure. Ancient ruins, wrecked starships or just the chance to strike it rich with a mineral claim could all bring adventurers to an otherwise overlooked location.

Some star systems contain more than one star, and occasionally these companion stars have objects orbiting them. A planet more habitable than the mainworld is unlikely, as this would probably have been settled instead. However, there may be gas giants (with or without moons), planetoids and rocky planets in the 'companion' system, though often there is little more than a few comets. Many of these companion systems are uninhabited, but they do make good places to hide precisely because they are off the beaten track, and there is no way to tell what may be concealed there.

There is one other possible adventure setting within any star system – a starship. An entire adventure can unfold aboard a ship in Jumpspace or within a star system. The former is good for pressure-cooker adventures in a closed environment. Other ships can be a source of rumours and general chit-chat, or opponents in space combat. And of course an adventure can be set aboard a drifting derelict.

Note that most of the traffic in a star system is concentrated around the starport and the mainworld, with ships running out to the safe 100-diameter limit and entering Jump to their next destination. In a busy system with a good port, this volume of space usually contains several ships and many small craft at any one time. These may include port utility craft, patrol vessels and commercial traffic using the port. Lower-quality ports do not see the same volume of traffic; local space may be empty for days or weeks on end over a Class D port.

However, there is not usually much incentive to go elsewhere in the system. Many outsystem moons and planets are sufficiently far out that it would take days or even weeks to get there in normal space, and ships equipped with Jump drives can get somewhere more interesting in the time it takes to reach an outsystem location – a Jump takes a week even if it covers less than a single parsec.

Thus only vessels with business in the outsystem go there. Patrol craft and vessels serving the outsystem installations, if any exist, have a reason to be out there. Few other vessels do. Thus systems with extensive outsystem mining operations or colonies may have regular normal-space shipping lanes served by in-system freighters and protected by patrol craft.

Unless there is some obvious reason for being in the outsystem, a vessel's presence there is often seen as suspicious by patrol ships. It is always possible (though unlikely) to encounter an Imperial Navy vessel making a sweep of the outsystem region as part of a patrol deployment.



However, the distances between bodies in the outsystem (with the obvious exceptions being moons of the same gas giant and planetoids close together in the same belt) are such that an encounter is unlikely. Equally, a vessel that gets into difficulty in this remote region will be lucky if anyone is in range to effect a rescue. The outsystem is a lonely place.

Ships can find themselves in the outsystem as a result of a Misjump or a badly calculated Jump. The former can also deposit a ship into deep space, into the vast gulf between star systems. If the drive is still functioning and the ship has fuel for another Jump, this is a problem that can be overcome. However, most ships only carry fuel for one Jump. A vessel stranded in deep space without fuel is doomed, far more often than not.

It is possible to obtain fuel in deep space. A comet or rogue planet could be used as a source of ice, which is then cracked for hydrogen. However, the chances of coming out of Jump within range of such a body might as well be nil unless its coordinates were known ahead of time. Similarly, while deep space refuelling points have been used by the Navy and by explorers for centuries, if their location is not known they might as well not be there – it is almost inconceivably unlikely that a ship could accidentally stumble upon such a site.

### ***Hazards, Encounters and Opposition***

The dangers a group of travellers may face can be subdivided into three general types – hazards, encounters and opposition. Hazards are impersonal threats such as those posed by the environment. Opposition means people actively trying to impede the group by various means. Encounters fall somewhere in between; depending on how the group handles the incident it may be dangerous, helpful, inconvenient or inconsequential.

The most obvious hazards are environmental. Characters can hurt themselves falling off or onto things. They can be burned or frozen, starved or drowned. Vacuum and toxic atmospheres can kill unprotected characters. Then there is radiation to consider and a whole range of biological and chemical hazards.

Most environmental dangers can be overcome by the use of good equipment and caution, but environmental details can be used to make the adventure experience richer. A gunfight is one thing. A gunfight inside an ATV which is sinking through melting ice on a toxic-atmosphere planet is significantly more interesting. Climbing a cliff is not usually a problem, but what about doing it in vacuum?

Whenever the characters are forced to use suits or breathing apparatus, the risk of suit damage adds an extra layer of suspense to an adventure, and the finite nature of air supply is a good 'clock' to keep the adventure moving. Conflict can be provoked by putting the characters in a position where they have almost, but not quite, enough life support equipment for everyone.

Other hazards can be used to endanger the group or to direct (or misdirect) them. A landslide or dust storm may not cause any casualties but it may cause the team to become lost. Or it could be combined with the air-clock idea to force the travellers to do something they otherwise might not. Since the landslide has blocked the easy path back to the ship, it will now take longer than the team has air remaining to get back, however up ahead is what appears to be a hatch in the ravine side...

Opposition can take the form of hordes of wild-eyed savages leaping out of the bushes at the travellers or animals that decide to turn hostile for whatever reason. However, opposition can be much more subtle than this. In a technological and civilised society, someone who wants to can cause severe trouble for an adventuring band by all kinds of non-physical means.

Characters can be impeded by nit-picky customs checks, law enforcement harassment, suspension of permits and licenses, or refusal to issue necessary documentation. These things can happen anyway, but an enemy who knows how to work the system can use it against the travellers to great effect.

This can be a useful plot device too, forcing characters to leave town ahead of the law after a false accusation or revelation of something they thought was buried and forgotten. A permit necessary to complete one goal may be offered in return for a different service, or criminal charges (trumped-up or entirely real) might be dropped in return for making some other problem quietly go away.

For shipowners with a cargo to deliver, delay can be devastating. The threat of a lawsuit or a similar reason why the characters' ship will have to stay in port until the matter is resolved can be a potent one as a commercial ship sitting on the ground is hemorrhaging money even if cargoes and passengers are not lost to vessels that are actually going to be taking off sometime soon.

Opposition of this sort is particularly frustrating as often the characters cannot get at the people responsible, even if they know who is behind the matter. Finding out and taking revenge or removing the obstacle can become a major character motivation, causing the players to generate plots on behalf of the Referee.

Legal and administrative opposition has one other advantage for the 'bad guys'; their dirty work is done by innocent cops, port workers and customs officials. If the characters take the direct approach and try to intimidate these people or simply shoot them, they will come into conflict with law enforcement, port authority security and maybe even the planetary army or the Imperial Marine Corps. Even if they survive the results, this creates new problems for the travellers with no effort needed on the part of their enemies. If the Travellers are on a Ministry of Justice 'most wanted' list and the Navy is searching for their ship, their task (whatever it is) becomes virtually impossible.





Dealing with this sort of opposition requires more than skills with weapons. The characters must tread carefully, collect information, and figure out how to thwart their enemy or at least get him off the case without running afoul of the legal system.

Encounters are not always negative. The characters may see wildlife or interact with people without any problems occurring. Many encounters provide useful information or are at worst mildly irritating. However, much depends upon how the characters approach the situation.

Some encounters can turn into natural hazards. For example, a stream is not normally much of a problem for an ATV, but if the characters recklessly charge into it at great speed (perhaps pursuing another vehicle or trying to escape from something) they may manage to crash their vehicle or find a deep bit and end up being swept downstream (ATVs are designed to float) towards a waterfall.

Similarly most animals will not attack a human unless provoked, frightened or challenged. Characters who insist on shooting at the local wildlife may be recognised as a threat and attacked by some creatures or may attract predators to the sounds of their victims' distress. It is often possible to avoid conflict with animals or frighten them off with noise, fire or simply by waving one's arms about.

Characters who are not paying attention may blunder into the lair of a concealed creature or find that they have managed to corner a savage predator without meaning to. A little bit of research at a handy data terminal can help avoid such problems, but characters who insist on crashing about in the backwoods with no regard to what they might find will sometimes run into trouble.

The most likely encounters to turn nasty, however, are those involving people. Most of the folks encountered by the travellers will be fairly neutral towards them and will react to what they do or say. Most people will be wary of a band of armed strangers wandering around and trust takes time to build, but a little simple courtesy and respect for local customs can help a lot in avoiding trouble and obtaining cooperation. Characters sometimes forget this and upset the people they meet – often the only consequence of this is an increase in the locals' antipathy towards offworlders... but not always.

The people met by the travellers should respond to what they do and say in a logical fashion. If the characters give offence and seem well armed or likely to turn violent, locals are more likely to disengage and call the cops or get their gun than engage in suicidal lone attacks. Most people will be unwilling to get involved in a fight – armed or otherwise – but may try to use intimidation. This could lead to escalation, of course, and as soon as the travellers start threatening locals with weapons, things are liable to turn nasty.

Traveller does not concern itself unduly with concepts like 'play balance'. Instead, the opposition that presents itself will be logical – though things will not always be exactly as the players suppose. This means that if the characters attack an isolated farm for some reason they are likely to be dealing with a bunch of surprised, frightened and untrained civilians armed with whatever is to hand; possibly a shotgun or rifle or two at best. However, the farm might be the retirement grant of an ex-Imperial Army corporal, who also retained his Advanced Combat Rifle.

A fair way to deal with this sort of thing, if it happens at random, is for the Referee to decide what the likely level of opposition would be and then secretly roll two dice. The dice give the answer to a question. In this case the question is 'how dangerous is this situation?'

A roll of near to 7 means that the situation is more or less as would be expected. Low is 'less' and high is 'more'. So on a result of 3 on this roll, the opposition is totally clueless and panics at the first sign of trouble. An 11, on the other hand, suggests that this is indeed the home of Corporal Deadly, ex-army trooper turned survivalist and his family, who he has armed and trained to deal with intruders. This should not be taken to silly extremes but it does provide a fair way to determine a suitable level of opposition.

If the players are not smart enough to figure out when they are out matched and to either find a way to win or else to disengage, they can take the consequences. Similarly, stupid actions will result in potentially fatal consequences. It may indeed be possible to get through customs by walking through with a live grenade held with the pin out, but the character doing this is not going to be allowed to get away with it.

Exactly what the response might be depends on the world's law and tech levels, and a range of other factors that can be abstracted by using the above dice throw method. There will be some sort of response though, and it will be logical, not play-balanced. This means that the first responders may well be a couple of ill-trained rookie cops with sidearms they barely know how to use, but if the travellers refuse to surrender to them, they will face an escalating response that may end up involving military forces. No world government will allow itself to be faced down by a bunch of adventurers.

This is an important facet of the Traveller setting – actions have consequences, and drawing weapons is not always a viable solution. This is a good thing for the game in many ways as it closes off some direct avenues and forces the players to think of alternative solutions rather than simply reaching for their guns.

Overall it is a good idea to mix different problems in an adventure: questions to be solved by logical deduction, some straight-out bad guys out to get the characters, shadowy figures throwing legal and administrative obstacles in the way, and a few natural hazards to fall off of, be crushed under or burned by. This keeps the characters guessing what is going to happen next and prevents them becoming



too focused on a certain type of problem. Add to this the ability of many characters to make even a simple encounter go badly wrong, and the travellers will be up against a serious challenge.

## ***CURRENT EVENTS IN THE MARCHES***

In a region of over 400 star systems, there is always something going on somewhere. However, the majority of these events, however life-altering they may be at the local level, are of no great consequence in the wider universe. For example, the efforts of the Tanoose Freedom League on Garda-Vilis in Vilis subsector are of extreme importance locally but are scarcely even known about on Lanth, a subsector away.

However, some events are of greater importance and may affect people all across the Marches. These events may serve as background to an adventure or the focus of one. Alternatively characters may find themselves on the periphery of great events, for example being hired to transport starship spares to repair a rival vessel sabotaged by McClellan Factors agents.

## ***Agitation, Dissent and Terrorism***

Most worlds have at least one faction that is in dispute with the world government or with big business. Most of these groups are careful to proclaim their basic loyalty to the Imperium, though there are anti-Imperial groups of course. A certain amount of dissent is acceptable to the Imperium and different world governments have their own views about free speech, the right to protest and so forth.

The Imperium only becomes directly involved when local resources cannot handle the problem and the dissenting group threatens the security or best interests of the Imperium, or sometimes when a world facing internal problems requests help via its Imperial representative. This is not always granted; worlds are free to govern themselves and that includes failing to deal with dissent caused by their own ineffective policies. It is not in the interests of the Imperium to have world governments collapse, so some measure of support and assistance may well be offered.

Some threats are considered significant enough to require a broader response. Among these is the Ine Givar, a terrorist group of unknown size dedicated to wrecking the Imperium. This is a rather large goal, but the Ine Givar are prepared to fight a long battle if necessary.

Ine Givar methods vary, and they work through a variety of front organisations. Some of these are legal and act as support networks, gathering information and funds, and providing a cover for the active cells to use when moving around. Others are overtly anti-Imperial but take the guise of honourable 'freedom fighters' and 'resistance movements' rather than terrorists. This is a useful cover as there are many dissident groups and active rebellions that would never deal with terrorists but are willing to accept help from similarly inclined fellow revolutionaries. These fronts allow other groups to be manipulated into working towards the ends of the Ine Givar.



Accusations have been made that the Ine Givar is itself a front for the intelligence services of the Zhodani Consulate, though this has never been proven. What is known is that the organisation is widespread, with cells on many worlds. These are well compartmentalised, with new members given no useful information until they have proven themselves.

While some of its front groups use only economic or irregular military tactics, that is they do not terrorise the population the Ine Givar as a whole is entirely willing to kill civilians. This is not indiscriminate; that would alienate the people that the organisation hopes to win over. Instead the organisation generally targets establishment figures and those who support the Imperium. The Ine Givar is willing to blow up a school bus if it contains the children of Imperial personnel, but always tries to spin its attacks as 'made necessary by illegal Imperial occupation of our world'.

The Ine Givar is dangerous because it is both local and widespread. That is, it has considerable resources and can reach areas thought to be safe. On the other hand, its personnel are local and in tune with the mood of the population. The organisation always presents itself as fighting for freedom on behalf of the oppressed population, and this propaganda comes not from a distant source but from people who live and work in the same conditions. The grievances that the Ine Givar cites may be hugely overplayed but they do have their roots in reality.



Travellers can become involved in many ways. They may be at a frontier starport when the Ine Givar terrorists take it over, fighting from the inside as local law enforcement stands around ineffectually outside. Or they may make useful contacts who put well-paid, semi-legitimate work their way (such as smuggling), only to later discover that they have been running guns to a terrorist cell... or that their contact has been exposed as an Ine Givar agent and the authorities are now looking for everyone he dealt with.

### ***Arden: A Rising Star?***

The Federation of Arden is something of a wild card in the affairs of the Spinward Marches. On the face of it, the concept is easy to dismiss. A single TL8 world, trying to forge an interstellar alliance, is hardly a threat to the stability of the region. Closer inspection reveals a rather more serious situation.

Arden is working towards acquiring a small TL9 industrial base to allow the construction of jump-capable vessels, but in the meantime starships can be obtained offworld. Much more important is the fact that Arden's position between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate could be of great significance in any future conflict. Jump-4 is the standard for many navies' warships, and Zhodani jump-4 ships could refuel at Arden and be in the Denotam system before the Imperials knew they had left their bases in Querion subsector.

While this scenario is not likely, it is a potential threat and the Imperium would prefer that the option to hit a naval base and cut the communications link to Vilis in a surprise attack were not available to the Consulate. Relations between Arden and the Consulate are watched closely.

At present the Federation of Arden is a political alliance based on Arden rather than a formal polity made up of world governments. However, some local world governments are coming under the influence of Arden-based diplomats and businesses, and there is a steady creep towards the formation of a political entity.

Travellers could become involved with Arden in various ways. The Federation always has a use for more starships and their crews, and might offer a subsidy to a vessel for nothing more than economic flag-showing. This would take the form of displaying allegiance to the Federation while conducting normal trading operations in the region. Ships might also be chartered on generous terms to carry out personnel transportation or freighting missions for the Federation. These would likely be quite legal, at least at first. Characters could also become involved in a Federation-backed coup attempt or an attack on Federation installations by local groups opposed to the increasing amount of control that Arden has over their affairs.

### ***Border Troubles***

The Marches contain the Imperial border with two potentially hostile states (not counting Arden). Wars have been fought with the Sword Worlds and the Zhodani Consulate in the past, and tensions are still present.

Neither the Zhodani Consulate, the Sword Worlds Confederation nor the Third Imperium are stupid enough to want a war, nor to do anything that will deliberately cause one. However each will, in the pursuit of its interests, push the others somewhat and will engage in brinkmanship from time to time, working on the assumption that the other party does not want war either, and will grant small concessions rather than fight a big war. This cuts both ways (or all three ways; four if you count the Darrians) and can result in the border zones being very tense at times.

Shipping is sometimes restricted and foreign vessels may be held in port during a crisis. This can also precipitate a situation, where a vessel is held for legitimate reasons such as contraband being found aboard, but the state where it is registered decides to make an issue of the matter because it does not want a precedent set whereby foreigners can interfere with the navigation rights of vessels.

Of course, none of the regional powers is a monolithic organisation, especially not the Sword Worlds. As a result there may be factions who actually do want a war, or who will pursue their own agenda without regard to the 'big picture'. Incidents are fairly common, creating a full-time job for diplomats and nobles as they try to keep the peace without giving away too much. This sometimes requires covert black-ops missions to deal with a situation that cannot be publicly acknowledged, let alone handled.

There are also numerous 'haters' in the mix. One example is an ex-Imperial Navy officer who lost comrades to Zhodani action in the Fourth Frontier War and now leads a raider group striking across the border at the enemy. They are not pirates though, never that. They are simply carrying on the war that everybody else has forgotten about and funding it with the proceeds of their missions, because the politicians will not do a thing to help...

People of this kind are sometimes regarded as heroes by others who live on the border and have reasons to resent old enemies. They tend to regard anyone who is not with them as an enemy sympathiser and are dangerous to the stability of the region. But the Imperium must tread carefully in dealing with these people because acting against them can be seen as acting for the 'enemy'. And there are those who think that such groups are covertly approved by the Imperial nobility since they cause damage to historical and potentially future enemies. It suits the purposes of foreign diplomats to say they believe this, too. Note that the Zhodani Consulate has far less 'haters' than the Imperium or the Sword Worlders.

There are also significant tensions between the Darrians and the Sword Worlders, not least over the ownership of the Entropic Worlds. Matters are not helped by the huge cultural differences between the two states, which leads to considerable racial tension even when there is no specific reason for conflict. It seems likely that the Darrians will try to reclaim what they see as their worlds at some point. This could be a flashpoint for renewed war in the Marches, so the Imperium urges restraint. This in turn strains relations between the Darrian Confederation and the Imperium, though not hugely.



Travellers operating in the border region can run afoul of all kinds of trouble caused by incidents they have no control over or did not even know about, but there are opportunities too. 'Hater' groups need weapons and supplies, and will pay well for military-grade supplies. Meanwhile the authorities may want information on haters on their own side, and may offer a bounty for bringing down foreign ones so long as the whole business is officially deniable.

There are also numerous possibilities for adventure as a result of invasion scares, heightened border tensions, covert infiltration missions and other events short of all-out war. A major conflict between the Imperium and its neighbours would cause serious changes to the setting and would go on for some time, but a shooting incident on the border, with diplomats frantically trying to sort out what happened and avert war, could be the backdrop for some exciting adventures without causing long-term changes.

### ***Cold War in District 268***

Trexalon and Collace have for many years now been involved in a cold war. This started out as a cooling of relations caused by differing attitudes towards the prospect of Imperial expansion into District 268, but has now reached the point of outright enmity. Both worlds routinely blacken the other's reputation with propaganda, yet officially claim that relations are cordial and that there is nothing more going on than a perfectly understandable difference in viewpoints.

In practice, there is a war going on in District 268. It is mainly fought in courtrooms and stock markets, by means of legal writs and economic gambits, but the occasional covert operation by black-ops units has occurred.

Both Collace and Trexalon have the same aim; to increase their own influence and reduce that of the opposition. Aid and assistance packages have been offered to surrounding worlds, while business efforts by firms aligned with the opposition are frequently derailed by the use of influence or less legal means.

Collace has the advantage of being friendly to the immensely powerful Imperium, but this also places restrictions on what Collace can get caught doing. Collace must be seen to play at least somewhat fair, or at a minimum to only do what is justified by Trexalon's actions. Many of Collace's long-term plans involve putting Trexalon in a position where her agents must do something that the Imperium will disapprove of, thus clearing the way for more direct action that is now seen as justified.

Trexalon, while somewhat freer to undertake whatever actions seem appropriate, must avoid triggering an Imperial response which it could not survive. Actions must be deniable or taken against third parties. Collace itself is sometimes a viable target and sometimes not, depending on the political situation in the Imperium.

Direct military action is out of the question, and probably pointless anyway. Even if Collace could somehow be taken out of the equation, some other pro-imperial world would emerge to take on the mantle of subsector-capital-in-waiting. The goal for Trexalon is to keep the Imperium out, not to get one over on Collace.

In addition to trying to sway political opinion and interfering in Collace business, Trexalon is rumoured to be backing pirates. If this is true it is a very serious matter, and one that will trigger Imperial intervention if proven. However, at present there are simply some pointed fingers and persistent rumours. The theory is that Trexalon is diverting spare starship parts to a secret raider base or bases somewhere in the subsector, in return for an agreement that the raiders will hit pro-Imperial worlds and shipping bound for Collace.

Travellers could get caught in the middle of the District 268 cold war in several ways. They might be engaged to investigate the activities of one side or the other, or perhaps encounter pirates working in conjunction with Trexalon. Their ship might be stuck in port due to the machinations of one world, and freed to proceed by the other in return for a favour later on. There is no telling when an apparently independent contact might not turn out to be an agent of one side or the other, which in turn could lead to the characters having to find out why their friend has been murdered, abducted or suddenly wants nothing more to do with them.

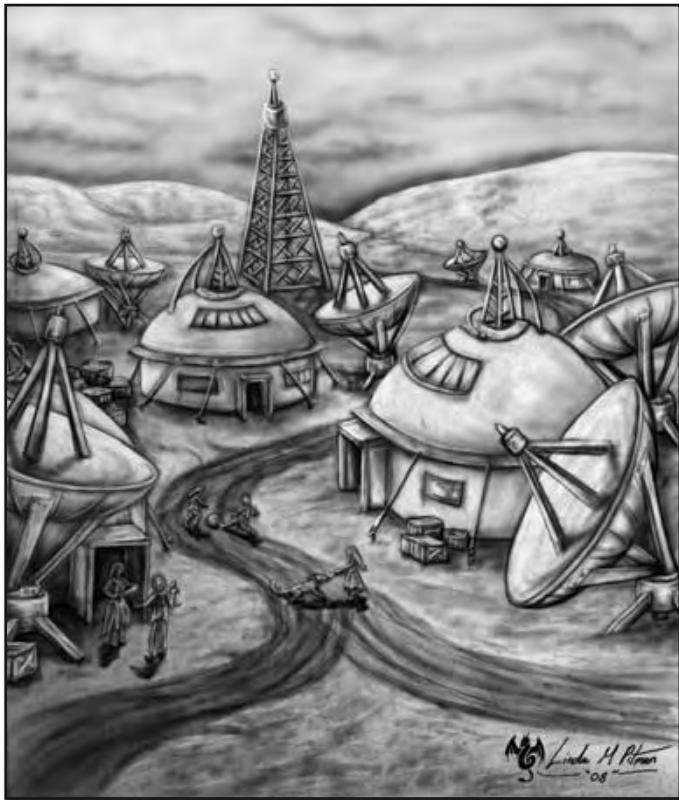
### ***Expansion and Colonisation***

The large Imperial corporations are always seeking new markets or favourable places to put new facilities. This results in a steady creep outward from the Imperial core and other centres of Megacorporate power.

Corporations and Megacorporations sometimes move onto a world by taking over existing industrial or financial installations, or by building new ones at the existing cities. At other times they may set up an operation in a remote area of the mainworld or in the outsystem. This is more applicable to mining and heavy-industrial facilities than financial institutions, of course. These installations are often surrounded by a purpose-built town for employees.

Normally, a corporation that moves onto a world will pay taxes and other fees to the local government, which can make attracting Megacorporate investment in a new facility a very good thing for the local economy, especially on backwater worlds with little money to invest in their own economy.

However, this situation is not always to the liking of the local government or population. On many frontier worlds and outside the Imperium, the corporations play fast and loose with the rules. A 'world government' that actually rules only a few thousand people in a small corner of the planet can do little about a major corporation that sets up a mining base containing a town with hundreds of employees in it, on an entirely different continent. While illegal in the Imperium, outside the borders such rules do not apply.



New industrial and financial facilities need communications to serve them, and there is a gradual move towards investment in starports, especially on the Spinward Main where the volume of traffic is sufficient to make a good port a lucrative investment. Of course, better ports tend to be soon followed by larger ships operated by bigger companies, causing the smaller operators to move on to more marginal routes where they can still compete.

This phenomenon has been referred to as 'corporation creep' and is a natural consequence of a developing economy in a given region. The Imperium as a whole benefits from such improvements in the economic situation, but it can be bad for local businesses and even the economies of whole worlds.

The Imperium is also involved in a certain amount of colonisation work, or at least, groups originating within the Imperium are currently undertaking expansion. Some of this is happening within the Imperium, either on reserve worlds or on low-population planets whose government has agreed (or been induced) to allow immigrants. There is also some colonisation ongoing beyond the Imperium. This is potentially a ticklish situation, as treaties with the Zhodani Consulate ceded many worlds to the Zhodani area of influence, and officially condoning colonisation of worlds in Querion subsector, for example, by imperial groups would be a violation of the treaties.

In other areas there are no such restrictions in place, but colonisation is still a potential source of conflict as the new arrivals come into conflict with the locals. The Colonial Office tries to keep control of such efforts or discourage them completely, but it cannot always be successful.

Thus while colonisation within the Imperium is fairly well regulated, operations beyond the border are more chaotic. Corporate colonisation for commercial purposes is undertaken with careful planning and good support for the mission and many private missions are well enough supplied and funded to have a good chance at success. However, there are plenty of land-seekers who, whether through over-optimism or lack of understanding of what is involved, are prepared to launch half-baked land grabs and hope for the best.

Commercial expansion, whether colonial or economic in nature, can result in considerable resentment among the local population. Travellers might be dragged into a guerrilla war between corporate mercs defending an installation and locals who want it gone. Alternatively they might be hired to conduct an advance survey for a prospective installation. Perhaps the backing corporation does not want its rivals to know it is interested in the site.

Ad-hoc colonial expansion spawns all manner of adventure possibilities. A failing colony might desperately need a shipment which rivals are trying to delay, or the travellers might actually be part of the colonial expedition. The early years of a new colony are a time of intense activity and there will always be work for resourceful and skilled individuals who can help fill the inevitable skills gap created when a small-scale operation takes on a huge task like the colonisation of an entire world.

### ***Imperial Politics***

The politics of the Imperium are extremely complex, and even in a smaller region like the Marches there is plenty of internal tension and political manoeuvring going on at any given time. There are many noble houses, each with its own agenda. Some are in direct conflict or dispute with their rivals whilst others are affiliated to or own business interests which bring them into conflict with Megacorporations or world governments. As a rule, intrigue and industrial espionage are more common than large-scale violence in such disputes.

On a grander scale, there is a high-level dispute ongoing in the Marches which can spill over into other affairs. The 'Mora-Regina Split' as it is known has to do with how the sector is governed and defended. Ironically, the 'Regina' faction, headed by Duke Norris of Regina, wants the fleet pulled back from the border and concentrated in a rear position near Mora, while the 'Mora' faction wants to keep most of the heavy units well forward in the border region, including the area around Regina.

The dispute is much deeper than whether a 'crust' or 'elastic' defence strategy is most appropriate, however. The Regina faction, which has supporters all over the sector and especially in less developed regions, maintains that resources, investment and military assets are all unfairly concentrated around Mora, while the Mora faction dismisses this as a pointless quibble. Mora and Trin are more developed than Regina and Jewell because that's how history happened, say the Mora-ites, and the provincials should spend more time on managing their investments better and less on moaning about a situation that developed as a consequence of simple economics.

The Regina faction seems determined to cause trouble, however. The latest issue is a campaign to persuade the Emperor to name a Sector Duke, and for it to be one of the provincials. Duke Norris has already requested the title, according to some sources. This has caused a deep rift in the Regina faction as other provincial nobles denounce Norris as an upstart and demand to know why they should not be considered for the role. Meanwhile Duchess Delphine of Mora has allegedly agreed to a suggestion by her supporters that she should perhaps make representations to the Emperor for a formal investiture in the position of Sector Duke, which she has held in all but name for many years.

The political wrangle can affect travellers in all kinds of ways. Political manoeuvring has wrecked several promising naval careers and caused a number of nobles to be greatly diminished in power and prestige. Many of these individuals now seek a means to climb back to prominence or at least get one over on their rivals. Characters might be caught up in the backlash from their schemes or play a part in them. Alternatively, the shifting political terrain might create opportunities for a big score or some kind of disaster for the travellers.

### ***Mysteries, Enigmas and Rumours***

There are a number of large and small mysteries to be uncovered in the Marches, and rumours of great treasures still awaiting someone to come along and find them. Some are well-enough known that there are documentaries or action movies about them while others are rather less well known.

There are numerous things that bear investigating, from the murder of an apparently well-liked starport broker to embezzlement on Imperial Navy supply contracts. Scientific expeditions study everything from rogue asteroids to the wildlife of the worlds of the Marches. Safaris visit the same worlds to shoot or photograph these creatures. There are many mysteries in the Marches, and many answers just lead to more questions.

The biggest enigma in the Marches is of course the Ancients. There are plenty of theories about who they were, what they did and why they went away but hard evidence is almost as rare as certain facts. What is known is that they left behind a number of sites and artefacts, and that more turn up from time to time.

The Ancients possessed extremely high technology, and many adventurers dream of possessing an arsenal of Ancient gadgets while living off the proceeds of their find. In fact, most of what was left behind by the Ancients is little more than either rubble or junk. That anything has survived the millennia at all is remarkable – it is even more surprising that some of it still works.

Trading in Ancients artefacts is strictly limited by Imperial law, which requires that any site containing structures, items or other evidence of the Ancients be immediately reported. A fee of Cr50,000 is payable for finding any site as soon as it is verified, and once investigation begins the finder can expect additional fees, of much greater value, depending on what is discovered at the site.

Investigation of many Ancients sites is conducted in great secrecy under heavy guard by Imperial armed forces, though some sites are more open. Undergraduates and senior staff from some universities are routinely sent to investigate some of the less highly classified sites, though what they find tends to be somewhat mundane for the most part, and security is still tight. A few sites have been thoroughly investigated (perhaps without results) and are now open to the public as museums.

However, it is possible to find previously unknown Ancients sites. There are always rumours about them, though most turn up to be spurious, if not outright hoaxes. Even if a site can be found, it may be nothing more than the smashed remains of a small settlement, or a crater with some debris scattered around it. Intact installations are extremely rare.

Slightly more common are objects of various sort. Most could best be considered curiosities, in that figuring out how to use them or even what they are for is beyond the human intellect. Of course, some objects can be made to work (often intermittently, unreliably and to less than their maximum capabilities) but even then there may be no way to know without trying a device whether it is a doomsday bomb or the equivalent to an automated toenail clipper.

Despite this, the mystery of the Ancients continues to mesmerise people and to lure travellers from across the sector and beyond. A group that finds evidence that leads to an answer to some of the big questions about the Ancients could retire on the proceeds, and even lesser finds are likely to be very valuable. They may also lead to a world of trouble.

The other common mystery is the 'lost ship'. Some legends are well known, such as the loss of the INS Kinunir on an apparently routine cruise in 1088. Documentaries, video dramas and even a popular song have been made about this vessel, even though no hard evidence of her fate has ever been found.

Other famous losses include the Amuar, a Leviathan class merchant cruiser that went missing in the Outrim in 1102 and the Gyro Cadiz task force, a multiship supply convoy that failed to reach its



destination in 984, during the Third Frontier War. One ship of the task force turned up wrecked by hostile action in a system well off the task force's route. The only clue to the fate of the remainder of the group was an epic poem written by one of the wrecked ship's crew, which spoke of shipwreck and a winter spent somewhere referred to as Twilight's Peak. The Gyro Cadiz' cargo was allegedly worth a fortune and has never been found.

However, the most well-known rumour about starship losses concerns the Abyss Rift in Lanth and Vilis subsectors. Numerous vessels have been lost without trace in that region, and others have reported anomalous conditions, minor Misjumps and a number of other strange phenomena which, statistically, make the Abyss Rift one of the most dangerous regions of space to transit. Despite this, the legend of 'lost treasure ships of the Abyss Rift' draws bands of adventurers from time to time.

Travellers can encounter mysteries by accident, stumbling on odd artefacts or strange places while engaged in some entirely different endeavour. At other times they may hear a rumour and decide to investigate. Most such rumours do not lead directly to treasure, of course. Following a totally false rumour can still lead a group to adventure and even some unexpected gain, and occasionally a rumour of this sort does actually lead (by a roundabout and difficult path) to something good.

Travellers might also become involved in a mystery-related adventure in other ways. An event may strike the characters as odd or out of place (see notes earlier about a consistent game universe) and lead to investigation. Alternatively, the characters might be hired on as guards, guides or research assistants for an expedition investigating something. This could be dangerous, and may be fairly mundane or quite novel. Examples include a scientific expedition into the mouth of a semi-active volcano, a safari to photograph a supposedly extinct species that has been spotted or a search for the grave site of an ancestor on a frontier world. Mysteries do not need to be huge and universe-changing to be interesting.

### ***Trade War in the Rimward Subsectors***

McClellan Factors is the biggest non-Megacorporate Imperial player in District 268 and is also important in much of the Rimward end of the Marches. The business group also has interests just beyond the Marches, in Trojan Reaches subsector to Rimward.

McClellan has been effective in edging out other Imperial business groups, not least as a result of its partnerships with local (non-Imperial) businesses. However, the Baraccai Technum, among other firms, is beginning to make some gains in the region.

There is a great deal of corporate manoeuvring going on behind the scenes, along with some overt operations. Among these is an intention by the Baraccai Technum to conduct speculative trade missions outrim of the Marches, into territory that McClellan views as its own.

This is an outright challenge and has resulted in a situation only a little short of an all-out trade war. Trade Wars are legal in the Imperium, within certain limits, and of course much of the conflict is taking place outside the Imperium. Overt attacks on shipping and installations are not an option, if only because this will cause retaliation in kind which, whether the trade war is won or lost, will result in heavy financial losses for both sides. That might be acceptable in a fight for survival, but it does not make good business sense and this conflict is about money-making opportunities.

There are, however, plenty of other ways to conduct a trade-war campaign. Both sides are seeking to exploit the Trexalon/Collace situation and to stir up trouble for the other on various worlds. If a McClellan facility suffers a serious labour dispute, BT is probably responsible. Or at least, McClellan will assume so and look for a way to strike back.

It is not known whether the boards of either business group would condone working with rebels or pirates, but it seems likely that there will be ambitious and amoral people somewhere within the management of each, who are willing to use whatever means necessary to win the trade war and further their own career into the bargain.

In addition to economic measures like trying to tie customers into long-term deals that prevent them dealing with the opposition, both BT and McClellan are currently conducting an underhanded





campaign of sabotage, troublemaking among the workforce and interruption of the supply/delivery chain. While blowing up starships and loading docks may be the most efficient way of doing this, it is not really an option although there have been a number of suspicious accidents.

Instead the method used is to strike at various points, none of which is very serious but which ultimately reduce the ability of the competition to bring goods to market. Thus a time-critical delivery of components may be hijacked, key workers hired away, loading equipment sabotaged and the contracted delivery starship detained in port a parsec away for three weeks fighting off a spurious legal challenge.

Although these measures will not kill the opposition's operation in a given market sector, it will disrupt it and reduce consumer confidence, hopefully creating an opportunity for a competitor to steal a chunk of the marketplace.

Travellers can become involved in this dispute in many ways. They may be hired to sneak into company offices and steal information or plans that will enable a later strike to be made, or become involved in a supply-truck hijacking. BT or McClellan might want a group of adventurers to investigate or deliver something without the opposition realising they are connected with the trade war. The same group might be approached by the opposition and asked to do the same thing. They may even be hired to intercept a covert delivery being made by an adventurer group... which turns out to be themselves.

This situation could become very complex, with the group at the centre of a web of deceit. They may be able to play off one faction against the other, or may end up being squashed in the middle.

### ***Vargr, Aslan and Droyne***

Most Vargr within the Marches are Imperial citizens and are involved in all the same sort of activities as other Imperial people. However, there are groups within the Marches dedicated to various causes, most notably the advancement of their affiliated states 'back home' in the Vargr Extents.

Most of these groups are fairly harmless, being concerned with making a profit from cross-border trade (which includes smuggling in some cases) or furthering various political agendas in a non-violent way. There are some downright nasty groups active, mainly in the Coreward-Trailing corner of the sector. These include piracy rings and freeport operators that cater to pirates, rebels and smugglers. Some are independent, some associated with Vargr political groups and some are part of bands like the Kforuzeng, one of the largest pirate organizations in the Extents.

Partly as a result of this, and partly because Vargr states from the Extents formed part of the Outworld Coalition during the Frontier Wars, many imperial citizens can be suspicious of Vargr in general. This leads to problems for the millions of Vargr citizens who dwell in

the Marches leading perfectly innocent lives. Ironically, the further away from the border a world lies, the less prevalent this attitude is – the problem is not really racial but stems from the activities of criminal groups who happen to be Vargr.

The vast majority of Vargr in the Imperium are as loyal as anyone else and have nothing to do with corsairs, smugglers and assorted bad sorts described above. It should be noted, however, that few Vargr find 'doggy' jokes funny, and racist humour of this sort is frowned on in most places. This does not stop racist Vargr making 'monkey' references when talking to humans. However, for the most part Vargr and humans get along and recognise one another as people first and foremost, with species coming a long way second.

There are some populations of Aslan within the Marches. Some are citizens of non-Aslan worlds, having settled there and been integrated into the local culture. The Darrian Confederation has a sizable minority of Aslan absorbed in this way. Other worlds have small enclaves of 'unofficial colonists' where ihatei groups have landed in a remote location and claimed it for their own. Dislodging them can cause problems with their clan, so many world governments just let them stay or even offer to recognise their claim to the land in return for military service.

Aslan mercenary units are not common but are well respected for their prowess and élan in combat. Individual Aslan and small groups are often encountered on business or working a job like anyone else, though there are strict limits on what sort of jobs male and female Aslan will take.

There is no large-scale Aslan agenda in the Marches, some clans trade in Imperial Space and some individuals work there. Each, and every group of settlers where they exist, has its own agenda and will pursue it in whatever way seems appropriate.

Similar comments apply to Droyne. They can be encountered anywhere, though they are not common. It seems that the blockade of Andor and Candory is not there to keep the Droyne in but to prevent unauthorised Imperials from going to their worlds.

Droyne ships and even small enclaves can be encountered from time to time, mostly conducting trade and other mundane activities, but sometimes their actions are utterly incomprehensible. Other than the Imperial observers around Andor and Candory, no-one knows what is happening on those worlds and those that can see cannot, in most cases, make sense of it. If there is an over-arching Droyne agenda in the Marches nobody is aware of it.

Travellers will interact with Vargr, Aslan and Droyne just like any other people they encounter. Any given group will have its own goals, and these may intersect those of the players in various ways. However, there is no single story associated with these groups; they will be part of adventures, perhaps even the reason for them, just like anyone else the characters may meet.





## ADVENTURE AND CAMPAIGN TYPES

Virtually anything can happen in a Traveller game. However, there are certain styles of gaming that tend to lead to slightly different experiences. It is important to pick one that will not alienate some of the players, by forcing them into a style of play that does not suit them.

### **Free Trader/Independent Starship**

Perhaps the classic Spinward Marches campaign has the players as the crew of, or otherwise associated with, a free trader or similar small starship. This might be an actual merchant vessel or it could be a Scout/courier, a yacht or a safari ship. The basic concept is that starships cost money to run and the group will need to engage in trading or take jobs in order to be able to afford fuel and spares.

There is no need for a rigid command structure in this sort of game. The ship must, under interstellar law, have a master (captain) and obviously the owner of the ship gets to decide where it goes and what it does. Things will normally tend to be quite informal on small ships of this kind.

Some characters will fulfil important crew positions such as engineers or pilots but others might be aboard for different reasons. Strong, tough guys may double as cargo handlers, streetwise characters can help find cargo or 'scrounge' spare parts when they are needed. Everyone can contribute in some way to keeping the ship flying.

It is not always possible to make a profit by carrying freight or engaging in speculative trading, so sometimes the crew will have to take other jobs. They may also become involved in adventuring situations for other reasons: following rumours in the hope of making a big score, being coerced into a job in return for necessary parts for the ship, responding to a distress call or investigating something unusual that just popped up on the sensors.

A game of this kind offers a great deal of freedom to the players and lets them carry around with them more or less anyone and anything they choose. This may or may not be desirable, as it allows the characters to avoid some situations by simply flying away. The players may suddenly decide to head off across the sector (or even out of it), which can cause a major problem in terms of Referee preparation for a game.

One alternative is to provide a ship with strings attached. In return for a subsidy that makes their ship a viable commercial proposition, the characters may have to carry out missions on behalf of their patron. This restricts the players to a smaller area and allows the Referee to introduce adventures, while leaving the characters free to do as they please the rest of the time.

A variant on this theme might be to impose conditions on an ex-Scout character's ownership of a scout ship. Again, most of the time the crew are free to do as they wish but the Scout Service will require either the fulfilment of tasks from time to time or the return of the ship.



### **Military/Naval**

A military or naval-based game is far more structured. For one thing the characters would be in a chain of command and expected to obey orders. This can be a problem for some groups with very independent-minded players, or when the senior-ranked character is played by someone who does not want to lead – or who wants to but cannot do it very well.

A well-run game can be very entertaining, as a rule most players find it more interesting to play aboard a starship than in an army unit and using fairly small ships are usually best. Tooling around the sector in a heavy cruiser, sending the marines in to deal with problems rather than getting in amongst it, is not to everyone's taste.

Naval games of this sort often involve a lot of politics and difficult decisions rather than action. This is especially true of large-ship adventures. If the heavy cruisers of the sector fleet are firing their guns in anger then something serious is going on, but smaller patrol vessels can have a fairly active time of it fighting pirates and the like without the need for a major war to justify a combat.

Frontier deployments work best for this kind of game – following the battlefleet around a base system is hardly the stuff of heroic adventuring. Alternatively if there is something unusual or special about the ship, this would place it outside the mainstream naval experience. Possible candidates include a ship belonging to naval



intelligence, a prototype vessel undergoing testing, or a ship used to dump misfit or no-hoper officers and given a range of odd jobs to keep them out of trouble. The converse of the latter is also a possibility – the sector admiral's elite trouble-shooter squad, handling the dirty jobs that the rest of the Navy can not be trusted with. Such a vessel might even carry oddball characters who do not fit in the chain of command but prove useful from time to time.

A 'Scout Cruiser' game could also run in this manner. The advantage there is that Scout Service ships tend to be run on a much more informal basis than naval ones, and may well have civilian experts aboard as part of the mission. Scout ships tend also to be much more free to wander about and have adventures than naval vessels with a patrol schedule to meet.

The adventures of a naval ship that has been damaged in combat and made a huge Misjump could be the basis of a long-running game as the vessel tries to get home, but this would probably take it outside the Marches... unless it was a Zhodani or Sword Worlder ship trying to sneak home.

### ***Mercenary***

Distinct from a military game, a mercenary campaign follows the adventures of a band of guns-for-hire. This may be a well trained, organised military unit of anything from squad to divisional size, or it could be a small team of experts, not all of whom are soldiers.

The mercenary game is another classic Traveller campaign, and one to which the Marches is ideally suited as a setting. As a frontier there are plenty of problems that require the attentions of military personnel. Some may be deniable, such as a dubious operation that the Imperial administration does not want to be connected with, some open and overt.

Not all mercenary games revolve around combat, though obviously this is a likely facet of mercenary operations. Mercs are often put into ambiguous situations where they must make decisions to which there might be no right answers. What seems like a simple assignment can suddenly make sharp left turn into something entirely different, such as when the team goes in to remove a group of illegal colonists and finds them all dead but for one insane survivor who keeps babbling about monsters...

Other possibilities include a merc unit that is sent out on a radio-silence mission just before a ceasefire is declared, resulting in them hitting what is no longer a military target. Or perhaps the strike goes well but the extraction is bungled, leaving the mercs stuck in hostile territory. A merc force guarding a corrupt government from an uprising by desperate peasants might have some serious moral questions to deal with. The occasional straight fight is also good.

As with military games, large units are not really suited to adventure gaming. It is better to base the game around small force or a



detachment, such as a military police, intelligence or commando squad that deals with the things that the mainstream mercs cannot – or cleans up their mess.

### ***Noble/Diplomatic***

Player-character nobles can be accommodated in almost any sort of Traveller game, but adventures dealing specifically with the nobility are a different proposition. This sort of game is not to everyone's taste as it tends to involve a lot of intrigue and 'talking adventures'. Opportunities for direct action are not always present and the need to follow etiquette can be rather frustrating for some players. The other problem is that unless every player has a noble character, there will be a 'chain of command' issue much like that encountered in naval or military games.

The adventuring party in a noble-based game will normally centre on a noble (obviously) but will also include his or her close retinue. These people will be friends or experts such as scientists, bodyguards and the like. While they may not have the same social advantages as the party leader, they should have plenty of opportunities to use their unique skills.

However, being a noble is not all about intrigue at court. Nobles are often given difficult tasks to carry out. Sometimes but not always, they are also assigned resources to use. The rest of the time they



must simply cope. Whether simply 'on their travels' or assigned to a particular job, a noble and his or her retinue can end up confronting a wide range of situations.

A noble campaign can thus range from investigating allegations of corruption at the ducal court on Mora, which mostly involves talking to people and piecing together a picture from clues, to being caught in a disaster zone and having to cobble together a plan to save lives or leading an impromptu assault on a pirate stronghold to rescue hostages before the corsairs can make good their escape.

### **Freelance**

The other classic Traveller campaign is the 'team of freelance experts' game. This differs from a Free Trader game in that the team does not need to concern itself with making enough money to keep a ship flying. This may suit players who do not like keeping track of the ship's accounts. This does not mean that the team will not have a vessel. They may, and it could be anything from a noble's yacht to a laboratory ship. The humble scout/courier is also a good choice.

If a ship is involved, then some of the Free Trader comments apply, however – the ship may provide too much freedom to suit the game needs, or it might enable the characters to move around and follow the storyline.

In either case, a team of this sort will normally contain a range of characters. Travellers tend to have a range of skills and to be able to function in most situations, albeit not well in many cases. The expert skills of the team will dictate what approaches are likely to be most effective. Those with good streetwise and diplomatic skills might be able to circumvent problems a combat-heavy team chooses to steamroller. There is, in the final analysis, no one way to succeed in a good Traveller adventure. A team that plays to its strengths will ultimately be successful.

The 'Freelance' style of game can take characters anywhere in the Marches. They might spend time on the frontier surveying prospective colonies, search for lost starships further into the Imperium and end up at the sector capital involved in a complex web of intrigue before heading out to a backwater world to help a band of farmers raise a militia to repel a Megacorporate attempt to take over their world.

## **FINAL NOTES**

In preparing this manuscript, I used a copy of Supplement 3: The Spinward Marches that I have had since 1983 or so. There are two extra worlds on my map, pencilled in during my teenage years. Both are in the rifts in District 268.

One of these worlds was dropped in there because I wanted to use a magazine scenario and at the time I was not bright enough to do more than transplant it wholesale. The other is borrowed from a novel I am particularly fond of. If you want a clue it is a low-tech world with a small base set up by ships out of the Sword Worlds. If you know which world, and which book, that might tell you a lot about my take on Traveller.

These days I ignore those entries. They are not in the Official Traveller Universe (OTU) and they are not even in My Traveller Universe (MTU) any more. But there was a time when I wanted those worlds at those locations, so I put them in.

And that is okay. The Official Traveller Universe version of the Spinward Marches is a baseline for your own take on the setting (YTU – Your Traveller Universe). It is the common starting point we all use. But the minute you play a game, the instant you decide to use your own take on what a given world looks like, it becomes YTU. Only game designers need to care about keeping the OTU right, and then only in official products. Everyone else is free to do whatever they like with it, including game designers playing around with different concepts.

Is this a good time to mention that I ran a one-off a little while back where the Darrians blew up Biter's sun with the Star Trigger? It was the reason WHY that made it interesting...

Nobody has the right to tell you what's right or wrong for your own Traveller setting. You want a black hole in the Abyss Rift? No problem. There is not one in the OTU and my physics degree is squealing in protest, but it is YTU. You want a wormhole from the Marches to the Solomani Rim? Why not? Blow up a couple of stars with the Star Trigger? Knock yourself out. Add a few extra worlds or move them around? Feel free. Heck, you can dress the Imperial Navy in pink and orange stripes if you like.

You see, this is just a baseline you have in your hands. It is a starting point, and not a bad one in the opinion of the author. But that is all it is. Where it gets good is when you take this information and use it. Except for the bits you change or ignore completely, that is.

Our future products have to follow this baseline for the Marches and be consistent with it – but your games do not. There is no right or wrong way to play a Traveller game in the Marches, there is just the OTU, MTU and the one that counts; YTU.

We are done here; it is time to take the Marches and make them yours.

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